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ABSTRACT

These five newsletter issues communicate activities of the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) and report on information resources and world-wide activities concerning children and child rights. The March 2000 issue focuses on children's right to education, assessing the matter form a range of differing perspectives, at international and grassroots levels; and highlighting the importance of the non-discrimination principle the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly for disabled and for Roma and Traveller ("gypsy") children. The November 2000 issue explores the relationship between children's rights and macroeconomic analysis and policy and how children are likely to be effected by macroeconomic choices. The June 2001 issue highlights the U.N. Special Session on Children, the purpose of which was to review progress made for children since 1990 specifically by returning to the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children convened that year; and to assert a renewed commitment to children and develop a new global agenda for them in the forthcoming decade. The March 2002 issue considers how to take forward the"mainstreaming" of child rights and illustrates this process through a selection of case studies from around the world. The October 2002 issue explores the issue of participation in programs and projects, and reviews how far children and young people's participation has progressed, through a series of regional overviews and thematic case studies. The overviews present the state of the art in each region, examine key barriers to effective participation, and suggest specific recommendations, based on experience, to improve future practice. The thematic case studies describe examples of children's participation in a variety of contexts. Each issue also contains an annotated bibliography of publications on children's rights and a calendar of forthcoming meetings related to children's rights. (HTH)

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Child Rights Information Network Newsletter, 2000-2002.

Andrea Khan, Editor
Laura Greenwood, Editor

CRIN/Child Rights Information Network
% Save the Children

Mar. 2000 – Oct. 2002

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CRIN Newsletter
CHILD RIGHTS INFORMATION NETWORK
Issue No. 12 March 2000

Editorial - Children's Right to Education - a matter for us all

This edition of the CRIN newsletter is devoted to the issue of children's right to education - one of the fundamental building blocks upon which a child's development and future opportunities in life depend. The benefits of education are widely acknowledged. Yet, as you read this, throughout the world 125 million primary school age children are not in school. Just as disturbing is the fact that among those who do go to school, many are receiving an education of appalling quality. Even though pupils spend a large part of their day there, few schools are able to offer an environment where children's rights, as set out in the UN Convention, can be fully enjoyed by children.

Choosing education as our theme reflects the increased interest and debate going on as we approach the 10-year review of the Education for All initiative. It is a debate that has seen an increase in active campaigning for children's right to education to be fully implemented. This activity will culminate in the World Education Forum to be held in Dakar, Senegal from 26-28 April. However, as one of the articles in this newsletter rightly asks, will this conference actually generate renewed and real commitments to deliver substantive change or will it simply be another wasted opportunity?

The Dakar conference will review progress towards the goals set in the original Jomtien declaration 10 years ago. Over the last few years governments, NGOs and other civil society organisations have all been involved in assessing the progress attained. These discussions have addressed the way to overcome the obstacles that still stand in the way of achieving the widely-accepted goals and which in some countries are actually beginning to undermine the progress that has so far been achieved

The World Education Forum's conclusions will then feed into the UN summit reviews, such as the Beijing +5 and Geneva 2000 events in June this year and the 10-year review of the World Summit for Children in September 2001. Undoubtedly all those who care about children's rights will be hoping that the Dakar Forum results in something tangible and useful.

The following articles all look at the issue of the right to education, assessing it from a range of differing perspectives. Some look at the international events discussed above while others reflect on achievements at the grassroots level, the place where all change ultimately has to originate. Among the latter CRIN is particularly pleased to feature an article on citizenship education written by a 17 year old young woman from Venezuela. Three of the other articles highlight the importance of the non-discrimination principle in the Convention. They consider the particular difficulties faced firstly, by disabled children across the world and, secondly, by Roma children in central and eastern Europe in accessing a decent education.

Contents

Editorial 1
The Global Campaign for Education Takes Off 2
Education for All - Gearing Up for the World Education Forum 3
Taking a Human Rights' Perspective on Education 5
Welcome to EENET 6
Education for All - Putting an End to Invisibility 7
Denied a Future - Roma, Gypsy and Traveller Children 9
Citizen Education 10
Peer Education among Street and Urban Poor Children 12
New Publications 14
Calendar of Events 17

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Continued overleaf

What is CRIN?

CRIN is a global network of children's rights organisations seeking to support the effective exchange of information about children and their rights.

CRIN is open to individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), UN agencies and educational institutions who are involved in children's rights, committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention or CRC), and want to share information with others. The network has three main aims which it seeks to meet through specific project activities and an information service based at the Coordinating Unit.

The network exists to:
- support and promote the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- help to meet the information needs of organisations and individuals working with and for children's rights; and
- support organisations to gather, handle, produce and disseminate child rights information through training, capacity building and the development of electronic and non-electronic networking tools.

If you want to join the network, find out more about CRIN or request information on children's rights issues, please contact
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Late News!

CRIN is delighted to announce the appointment of the new CRIN Coordinator, Ms Andrea Khan. Ms Khan has recently worked with UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre in Florence and has a strong background in communications and information work. She will take up the post on 15th May.

Above all, these articles share a profound commitment to making a reality of children's right to education and a recognition that this will only come about if the effort is broad and engages on many levels. Education is no longer solely the preserve of educationalists, but something that should be a concern for all of us working in the field of children's rights.

The articles on education in this issue of the newsletter were all submitted by individual CRIN members in response to a request for contributions. In selecting the articles for inclusion we have tried to ensure a wide range of coverage, both thematic and geographic. But the views expressed in the articles are the views of the individual contributors rather than those of CRIN itself.

The Global Campaign for Education takes off

An international campaign involving organisations in 180 countries has just been launched which aims to make governments face up to their obligations and acknowledge their responsibility for the 125 million children who are currently being denied a basic education.

The Global Campaign for Education has brought on board such international networks as the aid agencies ActionAid and Oxfam International; Education International, which represents over 23 million teachers and education workers; the coalition Global March against Child Labour, a group committed to the elimination of child labour; and various national civil society networks working in the areas of development or education.

In the light of the World Education Forum, taking place in Dakar, the campaign believes this initiative is an urgent priority, particularly in view of the desperate situation in which several national

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education systems now find themselves. In addition to the millions of children totally deprived of schooling, another 150 million - mostly girls - receive only mediocre and irregular education. The cost of education extracts a very real price which many families cannot afford. Added to this is the fact that one adult in every four worldwide, representing an additional 870 million people, is illiterate.

These statistics contrast sharply with the promise made by 155 countries at Jomtien, in Thailand 10 years ago, that education would be made accessible to all by the year 2000. Five years later, at the UN World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995, all governments and international organisations committed themselves to reducing discrimination against girls and women in their access to primary and secondary education by the year 2005. They also agreed to make primary education universal by the year 2015. If the current pace of change continues, their objectives will not be attained. Furthermore it is also important to mention that along with the Jomtien and Social Summit agreements, the commitments embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child are not being met either.

The campaign has therefore adopted a mission statement and an action plan (available on request), in a bid to end to the systematic violation of the universal right to education and the resulting wholesale waste of human resources that inevitably ensues. This violation represents one of the biggest obstacles to development. In a global economy where knowledge assumes increasing importance, the absence or lack of education contributes to the growth in poverty and to inequality between citizens and between states.

A highlight of the campaign is a Global Action Week from 3-9 April this year that will include activities at both national and international levels. In addition, a series of joint actions will take place during the Dakar Forum. We are very concerned that the forum may not deliver any concrete plan for achieving the 2015 goals. The first stage of the campaign will close with actions organised around the Geneva Social Summit review to be held from 26-30 June this year.

It is high time governments and international financial institutions recognised that education is a fundamental human right and that the responsibility for organising quality education for children, young people, and adults lies with the states themselves. It seems clear to the participants in the Global Campaign for Education that only worldwide mobilisation of civil society will force those responsible to act. And our active commitment is to achieve exactly that - mobilisation.

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Education for All - gearing up for the World Education Forum

In Jomtien, Thailand, a decade ago, world leaders and international donors set out a bold vision for the 1990s as the Decade of Education for All. They promised to provide good quality basic education for all children by the year 2000, pledging to eradicate discrimination and substantially improve the quality.

Now, only broken promises remain. Despite modest successes in enrolment rates in some countries, the vision that was born in Jomtien has never been matched by the commitment essential if the rhetoric was to be translated into actions.

Over the past year, a review of the Education for All decade has sought to learn both from the progress that has been made and the difficulties that arose. The aim has been to rekindle the momentum and commitment necessary if we are to turn that initial

Continued Overleaf

hopeful vision into a fact of life over the next 15 years. National reports on developments in education over the last decade have provided a basis for discussion at regional review conferences, with the aim of developing them into regional strategies and action plans. These will all be brought together at the World Education Forum in Dakar.

The draft framework for action

The Education for All Steering Committee, led by UNESCO, developed a draft framework for action, which was intended to be the basis for the action plans coming out of the World Education Forum. The regional review conferences were asked to build on the draft framework, developing more concrete action plans from it.

NGOs and government representatives strongly criticised the original draft framework. A critique prepared for the UK government on behalf of 13 NGOs condemned it on the grounds that the paper "represents more a prescription for inertia than a framework for action".

The charge could not be more serious. Fundamentally, the Education for All decade failed because bold statements of vision were never matched by concrete commitments to act, either by national governments or by international donors. The means to achieve the vision were never put in place. The whole EFA review is in danger of repeating another expensive exercise in target-setting without backing it up with commitments that will enable those targets to be met.

Regional EFA review conferences

The EFA Steering Committee has responded by trying to redraft the original framework to give it a stronger action focus. This should have happened through reviews and developments within the regional review conferences. Unfortunately the way these conferences have been run has made this impossible. Repeated presentations of issues in education, as well as round-table discussions that lacked a focus on action and solutions, have left little room to take the existing framework and build in strong, specific commitments.

At the Bangkok review for Asia, for example, the sub-regional "action plan" presentations at the end of the conference outlined unstructured lists of possible interventions in education, without giving any sense of priorities or direction among them. They amounted to brainstorms, not coherent action plans that could result in making children's rights in education a reality.

Some regional review discussions have even resisted being honest about the failures of the EFA decade – an honesty which is the essential starting point if we are to answer the question: "What are we going to do differently over the next 15 years?"

Ways forward?

The agenda of the World Education Forum needs to be completely different from the regional review meetings in order to have any chance of developing further specific commitments.

The original draft framework had a largely northern perspective. The EFA Steering Committee will need to bring southern civil society experience and more southern government representation into the process. This should at least specify what commitments are needed from donors and governments to achieve the targets. They also need to define how best to use the time in Dakar to sign up governments and donors to these commitments.

Ultimately success will depend on bold leadership. Almost all governments and donors seem to feel that they will be able to get away with defining targets without offering the resources or commitments needed to achieve our goals. Who will be the first to step out and confront this complacency, embarrass the apathetic by offering detailed pledges, and challenge others to follow their lead?

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Taking a human rights' perspective on education

Members of the Geneva-based NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child's sub-group on education met recently to share information about advocacy plans relating to a series of international meetings and to explore possibilities for joint advocacy. The first opportunity this year for joint action is the Commission on Human Rights, which is in session from 20 March until the end of April at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Education, Katarina Tomasevski, is presenting her second report to the Commission and the group is highlighting it so that the maximum attention is paid to it. Seeing education from a human rights' perspective provides a challenge to most governments, and to many international organisations, which are used to viewing it only as a service delivery sector.

Since last year, the Special Rapporteur has made two country visits, one to Uganda and the other to the UK. The reports (document number: E/CN.4/2000/6/Add.1 and Add.2) can be found on the Office of the High Commissioner's web site: http://www.unhchr.ch.

The Special Rapporteur's reports illustrate the differences that emerge when education is viewed from the human rights' angle. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that primary education should be made compulsory and free for all. However, the trend in educational financing over the past decade has been towards an increase in fees and other school-related costs for parents and for children who need to work in order to pay for their own or their siblings schooling. Given this situation, what can be done to enforce children's rights?

Another key area of interest from a human rights' perspective is discrimination. Who has access to educational services? What is taught in schools? National education statistics may not include refugee children or other groups of children at risk, and thus give an inaccurate picture of discrimination in a country. Internally displaced children may not attend government schools as their families do not dare to register. Gender or disability are often a basis for various forms of discrimination, as are race, ethnic origin and religious conviction. What can be done to make all these children who are discriminated against visible?

The ideal school is not only open for all children, it is also sufficiently flexible to embrace them all, despite their differences, providing quality education that has Convention on the Rights of the Child built into it. The worst school is one where children are taught to discriminate.

Article 29 of the Convention deals specifically with the aims and contents of education and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has recently decided to produce general comments on it. One reason the Committee chose this article to be the first on which it elaborates such comments is a wish to contribute to the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001.

The committee secretariat in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has started work on the general comment and a first draft should be ready by September this year. The secretariat invites NGOs to e-mail any relevant information on aspects of Article 29 to Maria Bustelo, as soon as possible. The e-mail address is: mbustelo.hchr@unog.ch

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Continued Overleaf

Welcome to EENET

The Enabling Education Network (EENET) is an information-sharing network, which supports and promotes the inclusion of marginalised groups of children in education worldwide. Based at the University of Manchester in the Centre for Educational Needs, it is independently funded by European non-governmental organisations and has an international steering group.

EENET was set up in April 1997 in response to the information needs of inclusive education practitioners, particularly in Africa and Asia. Since research and literature in this field tends to be culturally inappropriate to the needs of practitioners in the south, EENET aims to promote accessible and relevant discussion documents and training materials. The documentation of innovative work in the south is encouraged so that the lessons learned can contribute to practice and thinking internationally. This helps to promote the flow of information south-south and south-north.

EENET's underlying values and principles

EENET

- believes in the equal rights and dignity of children;
- prioritises the needs of countries which have limited access to basic information and/or financial resources;
- recognises that education is much broader than schooling;
- acknowledges diversity across cultures and believes that inclusive education should respond to this diversity;
- seeks to develop partnerships in all parts of the world.

In conducting its work EENET:

- adheres to the principles of the Salamanca Statement, [The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education states that "ordinary schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions".]
- believes that access to education is a fundamental right;
- recognises the intrinsic value of indigenous forms of education

EENET is committed to:

- encouraging the effective participation of key stakeholders in education;
- engaging with the difficulties caused by the global imbalance of power;
- encouraging a critical and discerning response to all information and materials circulated.

The majority of individuals and organisations currently on EENET's mailing list are involved in inclusive education from a disability perspective. However we are keen to include all issues of difference and marginalisation within the broader context of international moves towards education for all. Race, ethnicity, gender and poverty are issues which may also affect the lives of disabled children, but they tend to be tackled separately by many international agencies. EENET recognises the danger of separating the needs of disabled children from the needs of all children and believes that there is a need to take a more comprehensive approach to issues of inclusion and exclusion. Exclusionary practices exist in all societies. The cultural and political context of a country will determine the way in which inclusive education is practised and interpreted.

EENET'S definition of inclusive education can be summed up by the following:

Inclusive education

- acknowledges that all children can learn;
- acknowledges and respects differences in children, including: age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV and TB status etc;
- enables education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children;
- is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society;
- is a dynamic process which is constantly

evolving;
need not be restricted by large class sizes or a shortage of material resources.

[Definition developed for the IDDC seminar on IE, Agra, India 1998]

Enabling Education, EENET's free newsletter, provides an opportunity for practitioners to share ideas and experiences, analyse mistakes and celebrate achievements. Its aim is to facilitate conversations and to encourage the sharing, rather than the dissemination, of information on inclusive education.

EENET's long-term plan is to regionalise its activities in order to improve south-south networks and to encourage more practitioners to document their work and share their experiences. This year we are hoping to establish at least one regional partnership. Negotiations are currently underway with agencies in China, South Asia and South America. If you have any ideas or suggestions about possible regional partnerships, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Documents and training materials are available free of charge to south-based organisations and access to EENET's web site is free to all users. For details of the documents and video material available from EENET, and to be placed on our mailing list, please write to us at the following address:

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Education for All - putting an end to invisibility

A recent statement by the UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura reaffirms UNESCO's commitment to "reach the unreached". Among the most marginalised are disabled children, who are often segregated or ignored, and thus effectively rendered invisible. For this reason an international project on Disabled Children's Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been developed, with the clear aim of raising awareness and promoting the rights of disabled children. [Full details can be found on http://www.eenet.org.uk or from the author.]

Concrete examples of violations and good practice are being documented, with over 400 examples collected so far. The largest group of examples relates to disabled children's right to education.

Violations

One aim of the project is to highlight violations that until now have remained unrecorded.

Invisibility. Disabled children are often ignored in reports or statistics. In Vietnam, for example, when calculating the school attendance rate, the number of disabled children is first subtracted from the total number of children in a district. This perpetuates the fiction that disabled children do not need education.

Disabled children may be hidden. In Russia, medical professionals reportedly pressurise parents to abandon a disabled child at birth. It is sent to an institution, where his/her rights to education, medical care and individual development are likely to be denied, as well as the opportunity to learn to read, write and even walk, with children sometimes being classified as ineducable.

Rigid medical approach. Some countries use medical diagnosis to determine whether a child is entitled to education and, if so, what kind. The wishes of the parents, and the actual needs and abilities of the child, are routinely overridden.

Continued Overleaf

In Japan, disabled children are segregated by education programmes according to the type and degree of disability. School counselling actively persuades parents and children to enter disabled classes or schools, without fully hearing and respecting their opinions.

Direct discrimination. Some countries have discriminatory policies. In Austria, regular children can claim 16 years of education, pupils in special schools 11 years and those with special needs attending regular schools may only claim eight years. The Israeli education system divides deaf children into those with verbal communication and those who sign. The second group is assumed to be of lower ability.

Low level of resources. Where resources are generally inadequate, disabled children tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged. In Kenya, 85 per cent of children attend school, but only four per cent of disabled ones go.

In Zimbabwe, a survey of two poor communities showed that health and education services for the general population are inadequate. Although a few disabled children attend school, teachers do not have the skills to help many more. These children are denied not only an education, but also the opportunity for integration into society.

Improving practice

A second important purpose of the project is to show what is already being done to redress these problems, by providing concrete examples of good practice. Most of these are supported by NGOs and, although small, may provide, in the words of UNESCO's Director General "the seeds for new approaches". A common factor in many of the examples of promoting good practice is the sharing of information, knowledge and skills.

Combating invisibility through exposure, through meeting disabled children and their families, or by raising their profile in the media, is also very important.

In Yemen, disabled children have been involved in a Children's Day of Broadcasting. Thirty disadvantaged children, including disabled children, were given support to produce a radio programme in which children expressed themselves to the public about their problems and feelings.

Learning by doing. The pilot approach to implementation can provide both a vision of what is possible, and a learning opportunity for people to make mistakes and develop ideas and skills. In Addis Ababa, Radda Barnen supports a pilot inclusive education programme for children with learning disabilities. The aims are to develop a workable programme, to share lessons learned, and to promote the children's rights. So far results have been positive. Regular students have been helpful to their disabled classmates, and teachers, administrators and education officials are increasingly enthusiastic.

Sharing information and knowledge. Support networks, which pool ideas and examples of good practice are very important, especially in parts of the world plagued by lack of information. Parent members of the Lesotho Society for Mentally Handicapped Persons have become more aware of their children's needs, and are assisting and advising teachers how to cope with their children at school. They are invited to give talks and to share their experience during teachers' seminars.

Conclusion

The CRC applies to all children without exception. But we cannot assume that improvements in children's rights automatically benefit the most marginalised children. By turning the spotlight on disabled children, this project is highlighting violations of their right to education, to ensure that 'Education for All' really does include disabled children.

For more information on this project developed by the International Save the Children Alliance, or if you would like to contribute examples of good or poor practice, please contact the author.

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Denied a future - Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children

Since January 1999, the Denied a Future? project has actively engaged in promoting the right to education of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children. It aims to raise awareness of the fact that throughout Europe children from these communities do not enjoy equal opportunities when it comes to education. The project also seeks to create a climate for positive change by promoting good policy and practice and engaging the support of international institutions.

The Denied a Future? project objectives include:

- Gathering evidence from countries in Europe where education policy and practice discriminate against Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children and deny their right to equality of opportunity in education;
- demonstrating how this contravenes international or national legislation;
- identifying and disseminating examples of good policy and practice in order to promote the elimination of discriminatory practice from the education systems of Europe;
- bringing this evidence to the attention of national governments and international and regional institutions.

Central and Eastern Europe

Many Roma children throughout central and eastern Europe continue to be denied the opportunity to reach their full potential. From an early age Roma children receive powerful signals that they are regarded as second class citizens. Their first encounter with discrimination, racism and negative stereotyping is often in kindergarten or elementary school.

As a rule, the education services and facilities available to Roma children are of a lower standard than those offered to the majority populations. In the worst cases, entrenched racism on the part of many education professionals has fostered a belief that school exclusion, school refusal and under-achievement are the result of the 'inherent nature' of the Roma, rather than the beliefs and practices of the education system and the professionals employed within it.

An encouraging sign has been increased interest, at least from some quarters, to discover more about the rich experience of multicultural and equal opportunities practice that has been developed in many countries in the post-war period. However, this same experience shows that these approaches are challenging to implement and invariably meet with resistance. It also clearly indicates that there are no quick-fixes that can be imposed - if anything, the opposite is true and each community has differing needs.

Although legislation has been passed to protect the rights of minorities in many central and east European states, the record on implementation is often poor. In many countries, there appears to be an absence of political will to enforce policies that will end discrimination. Projects to bring Roma children back to school do however exist. But, where good practice has been developed, it has rarely been utilised as a basis for improvement in policy and practice at national or regional level. Thus, although many pilot projects are successful, they remain marginal efforts to overturn a systematic pattern of exclusion and discrimination.

Western Europe

In the western Europe, the lack of recognition of Roma and Traveller cultures continues to exist, fuelled by many teachers' lack of awareness and understanding and even hostility. In families which have traditionally been mobile, many children continue to grow up in a world of regular eviction, and of unhealthy and even dangerous stopping places which have no access to basic facilities. School attendance is difficult when movement is unplanned

Continued Overleaf

and enforced. Such children rarely have access to relevant pre-school experiences with their peer group. Schools are often reluctant to accept children who have experienced intermittent education. For settled Roma children in western Europe, the success of education often depends on the sensitivity of individual teachers and the initiatives of a small number of NGOs and local authorities seeking to introduce culturally sensitive practices and teaching materials to in-service training and practice in schools. Prejudice and discrimination from the majority population continue to be the experience of many Roma and Traveller children in western Europe.

Recommendations

Equal access to education is a universal right and therefore an absolute. Whatever the subjects of this right are or were, do or have done remains irrelevant. Discriminatory policies violate children's right to education. They run contrary all international human rights standards, such as: Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights.

Save the Children UK, which runs this project, recommends that all policies adopted by the authorities responsible for education at national, regional and local level take into account of the needs and aspirations of all groups within society. This includes Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children and should ensure that all educational provisions be adopted in consultation with Roma, Gypsy and Traveller representatives. Governments and other authorities with responsibilities for education must take specific measures to ensure that Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children do not suffer from discrimination and benefit from true equality of opportunity.

Should you wish to receive further information about this project, please contact Maria Andruszkiewicz, Federica Donati or Martin Kovats at Save the Children UK:

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Citizen education

Carlena Prince Castrillo, 17, from Venezuela

Every person under 18 years old is either a child or an adolescent. They have dreams, worries, great energy and a lot of potential. They are also smart and able to take on the challenges required by the world. In Venezuela, they represent 50 per cent of the population.

Children and adolescents show that every day they become more worried about their environment, that they can and must make a commitment, as citizens of their country, to identify problems and offer solutions in order to contribute to the harmonious development of the society they belong to. The inclusion of children and adolescents in social processes has been growing over a long period, thanks to actions taken by civil society.

Citizen education, human education

Every person under 18 years old has human rights and also a group of rights by virtue of their being children. These are contained in the UN Convention for Children's Rights. Venezuelan national legislation was adapted to accommodate this Convention's principles, and from 1 April this year, it will be in force through the Organic Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (LOPNA).

Through Community Learning Centres (CECODAPs), the aim is to disseminate and promote Children's Rights and the LOPNA. The overall goal is to foster an increased sense of social responsibility among all citizens and respect for children as individuals and as citizens with their own rights and responsibilities.

It is very important that, from an early age, human beings receive education about citizenship, so that they identify themselves as part of a society, in which they play a certain role. They need to be aware of their own individual importance and their contribution, and that without those the social system would not work. But just as they are expected to contribute, so the society they enrich must respect and value them. This is why it is necessary for them to know the law that protects them, in order for them to demand its fulfilment should it be necessary. By the same token, he / she will feel committed to what is going on in her / his environment and be aware of his or her responsibilities. For these reasons he/she will wish to contribute to its stable progress.

What really is important in this rights and citizens education process is achieving the child's recognition that he/she is an individual with abilities and limits. She/he needs to know about the environment, the collectivity he/she is part of, within which he/she makes exchanges and without which it is not possible to live. It is definitely education which helps the child define its world, its freedom, and its capacity to choose between good and bad.

The idea is to let the children and adolescents participate, to feel responsible for what is going on in their own life history and in their countries, to let them be the ones who diffuse and demand the respect for their rights. This is why CECODAP has several programmes in children's rights education.

The programme, Rights To My Size, works with pre-school children. Give your Heart to the Convention works with children and adolescents aged seven to 12, and This is The Way We Are scheme involves adolescents aged 12 to 17. They are taught to be leaders and promoters of their own rights, as well as to be citizens.

Young people have abilities, they just need a chance to demonstrate them. Children and adolescents who have the opportunity to participate in the mass media and in the social decision making, feel like citizens and act accordingly.

Little by little, a social conscience and an awareness about childhood and adolescence has been created. During the presidential elections in Venezuela, children took a document to the candidates which had been created with the participation of all Venezuelan children. The document was entitled The Hope Agenda. Once the president was elected, they presented it in person and discussed their problems and the ways to solve them.

The Constitutional Movement, created in order to get a new written constitution, decided to make a stand and developed the Children and Youth Constitutional Assembly. This involved writing a document proposing that any matters that affected children's rights had to be covered in the constitution. This was to guarantee the legality and protection of the new law, the LOPNA, which they also had a hand in.

Here we have a clear example what happens when people feel part of a project. They get involved, they defend it, they correct it and they work for its own good. The progress and well-being that the world's society has always desired, depends on a citizen education and on human values.

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Web site: http://www.auyantepiu.com/cecodap/

Continued Overleaf

Peer education among street and urban poor children

As a result of the Asian economic crisis, unemployment has increasingly risen in the Philippines. This has led to small children, some as young as seven or eight, taking to the streets to beg or sell anything that can be sold to motorists or a passers-by - garlands, rags, newspaper, cigarettes, you name it. Others engage in some trade or other, usually these are the older ones, 12 to 13 year olds, who are very vulnerable to prostitution and other crime syndicates. Seventy-five per cent of these children still have families, but they would rather stay on the streets than become victims of abuse at home.

ChildHope Asia Philippines is one of the NGOs with street children-based programmes and services. It too believes that the street is not the place in which children should grow up. This is why its biggest project component, the Education on the Streets programme, has continuously employed 16 full-time street educators. These reach out to the children to assist them with their basic emotional and material needs, and to convince them to voluntarily enter a shelter or go back to their families, whenever it is deemed safe for them to do so.

Sixteen street educators are not enough to cover their respective areas of assignment. They need assistance in referring children to clinics, in conducting sessions, in counselling children, and in motivating them to live in shelters. This is where peer education, otherwise known as the child-to-child approach, becomes relevant and useful.

The Street Education programme uses the child-to-child approach through what are known as junior health workers (JHWs). The JHWs are a unique feature of the programme. At present, 30 JHWs are being re-trained under a World Health Organization-assisted project. This tackles the main barriers to existing health services that are available to street and urban poor children and adolescents.

Choosing the JHWs

They are selected from among the older children who are living on the streets or with their families, since the street education programme covers only street and community-based children. They should also be between the ages of 10 and 18. This is the age when children are most likely to exhibit leadership skills, an important characteristic to consider. It is also important that the child is literate and can prepare simple reports. Boys and girls have equal opportunities to become JHWs. They should be patient, talented, and must possess a strong sense of responsibility. He/she must not show favouritism in dealing with their fellow children but should instead manifest sensitivity and genuine concern for others. Lastly, he/she must be faithful/committed to their job despite the difficult circumstances surrounding it.

Requirements

It is not enough that the child possesses all the above qualifications. There are also some basic requirements that each child must meet. Street children who wish to become JHWs, must have attended two or three sessions on any of the following topics: value clarification, child rights, primary health care, first aid, drug abuse prevention education, STD/HIV-AIDS, mental health, and human sexuality and family planning. They must also maintain regular contact with the street educators.

Training and improving skills

After the children have been selected, they undergo a four-day training workshop that focuses on the following topics: team-building, self awareness, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, what is a JHW?, health and sickness, common illnesses, existing resources, preparation of a plan of action.

The children also receive hands-on training by assisting their partner street educators in conducting sessions among the street children in their respective areas of assignment.

Roles and functions

The JHWs are required to attend regular monthly/ quarterly meetings as well as the General Assembly of Junior Health Workers. They must also improve their knowledge of values, first aid, and substance abuse prevention by attending training sessions conducted by staff of the Street Education

Programme. They help reach out to other street children, go out on the streets to contact children in need, administer first aid and simple home remedies, and accompany the children to the different referral services, systematic follow-ups are an important part of the job. They are also involved in the training of new JHWs, thereby putting to good use the principles of the child-to-child approach.

Job problems

During the above-mentioned monthly meetings, the children bring up immediate concerns regarding their work. Some of these include: replenishment of their first-aid kit supplies/contents; difficulty in referring children to the hospitals since they occasionally, do not carry complete identification as JHWs, in the process, they are sometimes not taken seriously by the hospital staff; balancing their lives/roles – as children, students, family members, and income earners; frustration on the part of the child they accompany to hospitals at not being able to receive the proper medical attention sought; managing the behaviour of the children in group sessions; keeping motivated and pro-active; transportation money; more regular support and training meetings; difficulty in approaching some children who are shy or mistrustful.

In response to these expressed needs, ChildHope Asia Philippines and its sister agency, Families and Children for Empowerment and Development (FCED), have started implementing the WHO-pilot project that would help increase access to the provision and utilization of health services by street children. It is hoped that with the project's activities and interventions, ChildHope and FCED will be able to effectively resolve some of the barriers and issues, and develop a friendlier environment for these child/youth volunteers.

When Dr John Howard, the WHO consultant from Macquarie University, visited the Street Education Programme last year, he found the current batch of JHWs very enthusiastic, impressive, committed, and very eager to learn. They clearly understand issues of confidentiality, how to solve problems, and the UN Convention the Rights of the Child. They recognize substance use as an issue in their communities and among street children, and note an increase in injection drug use by older youths and adults. Most importantly, they advocate among their peers against early and unprotected sexual activity and for regular check-ups for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Although these young people are not problem-free, they are willing to help others and are generous with their scarce time. FCED, for its part, is also implementing a project called Expanding Children's Participation in Social Reform (ECPSR), where children are recruited and trained to advocate among other children on issues that concern them. For more information on this project contact ChildHope Asia.

The ability of children to help other children, should never be underestimated. Instead, organizations working with street and urban poor children should try to develop their own unique ways of empowering their clients to teach and help other children, using the child-to-child approach.

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Continued Overleaf

New Publications

Child Domestic Work, Innocenti Digest, No.5
UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre,
Piazza SS Annunziata 12, 50122, Florence, Italy
tel: +39 55 20330
fax: +39 55 244817
email: orders@unicef-icdc.it

International Children's Rights Thesaurus
Prepared by Anne di Lauro
The Thesaurus is trilingual with separate editions in English, French and Spanish
Ordering as above

Child Protagonism and the Convention of the Rights of the Child at Municipal Level
in Spanish
PRONICE, Guatemala,
email: pronice@infovia.com.gt

Violence Against Children in the Context of War and Impunity
in Spanish
Ordering as above

Child Soldiers in South Africa
Edited by Elizabeth Bennett, Final edit by Susan Unsworth
Institute for Security Studies, PO Box 4167, Halfway House 1685, South Africa
tel: +27 11 315 7096
fax: +27 11 315 7099
email: iss@iss.co.za

Child rearing in Hubai Village, China
Zhou Yajun, Liao Yi, Susan Champagne
Bernard van Leer Foundation, PO Box 82334
2508 EH The Hague, The Netherlands
tel: +31 70 351 2040
fax: +31 70 350 2373
email: registry@bvleerf.nl
web site: http://bernardvanleer.org

Children and Media: Image, Education, Participation.
Yearbook 1999 from the UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen.
Nordicom, Goteborg University, PO Box 713, SE 405 30, Goteborg, Sweden
fax: +46 31 773 46 55
email: ulla.bergstrom@nordicom.gu.se

Children, Economics and the EU - Towards Child Friendly Policies
Save the Children
Radda Barnen, Torsgatan 4, S-107 88 Stockholm, Sweden
tel: +46 8 698 9000
fax: +46 8 698 9014
email: rbpublishing@rb.se
web site: http://childrightsbookshop.org

Convention on the Rights of the Child Impact Study: Study to Assess the Effect of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Institutions and Actors who have the Responsibility and the Ability to Advance Children's Rights
Lisa Woll
Ordering as above

Everyone has the Right to Grow and Blossom: Learning about Children with Disabilities/ Todos tenemos derecho a florecer: Material de formacion sobre ninos con discapacidad funcional
Christina Hagner
Ordering as above

Children's Rights - The Future Starts Here
Amnesty International Publications, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW
tel: +44 20 7413 5500
fax: +44 20 7956 1157
web site: http://www.amnesty.org

Choose With Care: a Recruitment Guide for Organisations Working with Young Children
Meredith Kiraly
ECPAT Australia and MacKillop Family Services
PO Box 1725, Collingwood, Vic 3066, Australia
tel: +61 3 9419 1844
fax: +61 3 9419 9518
email: ecpat@ecpat.org

Empty Desks, Empty Future - The Curse of Classroom Gender Gaps
IDS Publications Office, Institute of Development Studies,
Brighton, BN1 9RE, United Kingdom
tel: +44 1273 678269

fax: +44 1273 621202
email: ids.books@sussex.ac.uk

Funding Guide for Child NGOs in Europe and Across the World
Available in French and English
EFCW, 53 Rue de la Concorde, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium
tel: +32 2 511 70 83
fax: +32 2 511 72 98
email: efcw@dproducts.be
web site: http://www.efcw.org
Price, 600 BEF

Helping Not Hurting Children: An alternative approach to child labour
DFID (Department for International Development)
94 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 5JL, United Kingdom
tel: +44 20 7917 7000
tel from Overseas: +44 1355 84 3132
email: enquiry@dfid.gov.uk
web site: http://www.dfid.gov.uk

Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child
Manuel d'Application de la Convention Relative aux Droits de l'Enfant
French version now available
UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, H-9F, New York, NY 10017, United States of America
fax: +1 212 326 7768
email: pubdoc@unicef.org
http://www.unicef.org

Including Disabled Children in Everyday Life, a practical guide
Save the Children UK, Publications,
17 Grove Lane, London, SE5 8RD, United Kingdom
tel: +44 20 7703 5400
fax: +44 20 7709 2508
email: publications@scfuk.org.uk
web site: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk

Juvenile Justice in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Laws and Legislation
Defence for Children International/ Palestine Section
PO Box 55201, Jerusalem, Via Israel
tel: +972 2 296 0751/2
fax: +972 2 296 0750
email: dcipal@palnet.com

Political Participation of Youth Below Voting Age
Edited by Barbara Riepl and Helmut Wintersberger
European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research
Bergassa 17, A-1090 Vienna, Austria
tel: +43 1 319 45 050
fax: +43 1 319 45 0519
email: ec@euro.centre.org
web site: http://www.euro.centre.org/causa/ec/

Prison Bound: The Denial of Juvenile Justice in Pakistan
Human Rights Watch
350 5th Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10118-3299, United Stated of America
tel: +1 212 216 1237/1239
fax: +1 212 736 1300
email: hrwnyc@hrw.org
web site: http://www.hrw.org

Psycho-Social Help to War Victims: Women Refugees and Their Families - from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (2nd Revised Edition)
Editors: Libby Tata Arcel, Vera Folnegovic-Smalc, Dragica Kozaric-Kovacic, Ana Marusic
Available in English, Serbo-Croatian and Russian
International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, PO Box 2107, 1014 Copenhagen o, Denmark
tel: +45 33 760600
fax: +45 33 760500
email: publications@irct.org
web site: http://www.irct.org

War Violence, Trauma and the Coping Process - Armed Conflict in Europe and Survivor Response
Editor: Libby Tata Arcel
Ordering as above.

So Close and Yet So Far Away
Milica Krstanovic
Yugoslav Children's Rights Centre, 11000 Beograd, Macvanska 8, Yugoslavia
email: cpd@eunet.yu

Continued Overleaf

Standing Up for Ourselves
ECPAT IIYPPP
email: ecpatiyp@pworld net.ph

State of Education in Tanzania, Crisis and Opportunity
Kuleana Centre for Children's Rights, Publications Department
PO Box 27, Mwanza, Tanzania
tel: +255 68 500 911
fax: +255 68 500 486
email: kuleana@raha.com

The Child and the European Convention on Human Rights
Ursula Kilkelly
Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot, Hants, GU11 3HR, United Kingdom
(In the US) Ashgate Publishing Company, Old Post Road, Brookfield, Vermont 05036, United States of America
tel: +44 1252 331551
fax: +44 1252 317 707
email: ashgate@cityscape.co.uk
web site: http://www.ashgate.com

The Human Right to Education
Douglas Hodgson
Ordering as above

Trafficking in Child Domestic Workers, in particular Girls in Domestic Service in West and Central Africa
Available in French and English
UNICEF, Bureau Regional pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre, 04 BP 443, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire
fax: +225 227607

Untapped Potential: Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict
Allison Pillsbury, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
tel: +1 212 551 3107
fax: +1 212 551 3180
email: allison@intrescom.org

Young Children's Rights. Exploring Beliefs, Principles and Practice
Priscilla Alderson
Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 116 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9JB, United Kingdom
tel: +44 20 7833 2307
fax: +44 20 7837 2917
email: post@jkp.com
web site: http://www.jkp.com

Youth in Development - A Trojan Horse?
Niels Lund, Danish Youth Council
Scherfigsvej 5, DK-2100 Copenhagen, Denmark
tel: +45 39 29 88 88
fax: +45 39 29 83 82
email: nl@duf.dk
web site: http://www.duf.dk

Calendar of Events

31 March - 2 April 2000
First Assembly of the NGO Working Group from the World Bank from ECA Region, Vilnius, Lithuania
Roberta Harper
email: ngowbwg@bankwatch.org

6-7 April 2000
National Workshop on the Involvement of NGOs in the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children, New Delhi, India
Indian Committee of Youth Organisations,
F-13, South Extension - One, New Delhi 110 049, India
tel: +91 11 462 4776
fax: +91 11 464 1807
email: icyo@iname.com

10-11 April 2000
Investing in our Children's Future, World Bank, Washington DC, USA
Mary Eming Young, World Bank, Human Development Network, 1818 H Street, NW,

Washington DC 20433, Room G8 034, USA
web site: http //www.worldbank.org/children

19-21 April 2000
International Conference on Street Children in East Africa, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Conference Secretariat, AFROCENTRE, Attn. Dr. Colletta Kibassa, PO Box 65395, Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania
tel: +255 51 151739
fax: +255 51 152977

26-28 April 2000
World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal
Svein Psttveit, EFA Forum Secretariat, 7, Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07SP, France
tel: +33 1 4568 1524
fax: +33 1 4568 5629
email: efa@unesco.org
web site: http://www2.unesco.org/wef/

10-13 May 2000
The Century of the Child, Changes in Views on (residential) Child and Youth Care, The Netherlands
Organisation Secretariat, Conference Agency Limburg, PO Box 1402, 6102 BK Maastrict, the Netherlands
tel: +31 43 3619192/ +31 43 3619020/ 3560152
email: cal.conferenceagency@wxs.nl

13-17 May 2000
Summit 2000 Children, Youth and the Media - Beyond the Millenium, Toronto, Canada
Joseph Pereira, Director, SUMMIT 2000, 60 St. Clair Avenue East, Suite 1003, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4T 1N5
tel: +416 515 0466
fax: +416 515 0467
web site: http://www.summit2000.ne

15 May - 2 June 2000
24th Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Geneva, Switzerland
State Party Reports to be considered: Cambodia, Djibouti, Georgia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Malta, Norway, Suriname.
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
tel: +41 22 917 9301, fax: +41 22 917 9022
email: pdavid.hchr@unog.ch
web site: http://www.unhchr.ch
Pre-Sessional Working Group (25th Session), Geneva, Switzerland
NGO reports to be considered: Burundi, Central African Republic, Colombia, Comoros, Finland, Marshall Islands, Slovakia, Tajikistan, United Kingdom - Isle of Man.
NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, PO Box 88, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland
tel: +41 22 734 0558
fax: +41 22 740 1145

15-17 May 2000
"Step by Step" Strategies for Child Welfare Tomorrow, Salzburg, Austria
European Forum for Child Welfare
Conference Secretariat, Pro Juventute Austria, A-5013 Salzburg, Postfach 200, Austria
tel: +43 662 431355 63
fax: +43 662 431355 32
email: congress@projuventute.at

31 May - 6 June 2000
Prix Jeunesse International, Munich, Germany
Prix Jeunesse International, c/o Bayerischer Rundfunk, 80300 Munchen, Germany,
tel: +49 89 5900 2058
fax: +49 89 5900 3053
email: ks@prixjeunesse.de
web site: http://www.prixjeunesse.de

6-10 June 2000
2nd International Conference on Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Sarah Wilkinson, Conference Secretariat, Elsevier

Continued Overleaf

Science Ltd., The Boulevard, Langford Lane, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1GB, UK
tel: +44 1865 843691
fax: +44 1865 843958
email: sm.wilkinson@elsevier.co.uk
web site: http://www.elsevier.nl/locate/camh2000

18-24 June 2000
Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children: A Criminal and Justice Perspective
Robert Pinheiro, Promotions Manager, International Networking Events, The British Council, 1 Beaumont Place, Oxford, OX1 2PJ, UK
tel: +44 1865 302704
fax: +1865 557368
email: robert.pinheiro@britishcouncil.org
web site: http://www.britishcouncil.org/networkevents

25-28 June 2000
Victimization of Children and Youth: An International Research Conference, Durham, New Hampshire, USA
Melissa Averill, Conference Facilitator, University of New Hampshire, 126 Horton Social Science Centre, Durham, NH 03824, USA
tel: +1 603 862 0767
fax: +1 603 862 1122
email: maverill@hopper.unh.edu

3-21 July 2000
International Summer Institute 2000: Media Education, London, United Kingdom
Dr David Buckingham, Reader in Education, Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL, UK
fax: +44 20 7612 6177
email: teemddb@mentor.ioe.ac.uk

9-14 July 2000
AIDS 2000 - 13 International AIDS Conference, Durban, South Africa
Congrex, The XIIIth International AIDS Conference, PO Box 1620, Durban 4000, South Africa
tel: +27 31 301 0400
fax: +27 31 301 0191
email: congrex@aids2000.com

24-28 July 2000
International Special Education Congress 2000, Manchester, United Kingdom
ISEC 2000 Programme Committee, CEN School of Education, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, UK
tel: +44 161 275 3510/ 3511
fax: +44 161 275 3548
email: ISEC@man.ac.uk
web site: http://www.isec2000.org.uk

7-11 August 2000
IFCW - Annual World Forum 2000, Sydney, Australia
7-8 August 2000, Management and Leadership Institute
9-11 August 2000, Children First' Conference
World Forum Convener, PO Box 4023, Pitt Town, NSW 2756, Australia
tel: +61 2 4572 3079
fax: +61 2 4572 3972
email: sharyn@zeta.org.au

3-6 September 2000
13th International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect, Durban, South Africa
Kimberley Svevo, ISPCAN Executive Director, 200 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 500, Chicago, Illinois, United States of America
tel: +1 312 578 1401
fax: +1 312 578 1405
email: ispcan@aol.com

15-20 October 2000
Peace Education: Rising to the Challenge of Children's Rights, Buntingford, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom
Information Manager, International Networking Events, The British Council, 1 Beaumont Place, Oxford, OX1 2PJ, UK
tel: +44 1865 302704
fax: +1865 557368
email: network.events@britishcouncil.org
web site: http://www.britishcouncil.org/networkevents

CRIN
CHILD RIGHTS INFORMATION NETWORK

Name of organisation .....

Acronym/Abbreviation ..... Date of establishment .....

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Name of the CRIN contact in your organisation .....

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Country .....

Tel (Include country codes): .....

Fax (Include country codes): .....

Email: .....

Web site: ..... Do you use the Worldwide Web? : .....

Number of staff .....

Languages used in your organisation: .....

Number of CRIN Newsletters in English, French or Spanish .....

Please give a short description of your organisation's aims and activities (please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary).

Which countries does your organisation work in? (please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary).

Continued Overleaf

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Non-governmental		UN Agency		Community-based	
Research		International		Governmental	

Does your organisation? (Please tick the appropriate box or boxes)

Work directly with children		Lobbying governments and the UN	
Work in partnership with other organisations		Provide training on children's rights	
Provide funding to other organisations		Undertake research on children's rights	
Work with the media and press		Undertake legal casework on behalf of children	

Which age group does your organisation target? (Please tick the appropriate box or boxes)

Children 0-4		Children 5-15		Children 16-18	

Does your organisation have expertise in any of the following themes? (Please tick the appropriate box or boxes)

Children in care, fostering and adoption		Children living with HIV/AIDS	
Child Labour and working children		Individual cases of violations	
Children in armed conflict		Children in Conflict with the law	
Reporting and monitoring on the CRC		Children and the media	
Children with disabilities		Participation of children in decision making	
Children and education		Refugee and unaccompanied children	
Environment and habitat		Sexual exploitation of children	
Children and health		Children working and living on the street	

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Signature: ..... Date: .....

Please return to:
Coordinator of the Child Rights Information Network, 17 Grove Lane, London UK, SE5 8RD.
tel +44 20 7716 2400, fax +44 20 7793 7626, email crin@pro-net.co.uk

Please enclose any relevant publications, newsletters, annual reports and brochures

Children and macroeconomics

PS 031522

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a membership-driven organisation and network of over 1,000 child rights organisations around the world. It strives to improve the lives of children through the exchange of information about child rights and the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a membership-driven organisation and network of more than 1,000 child rights organisations around the world. It strives to improve the lives of children through the exchange of information about child rights and the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. CRIN connects members through the following services:

A website
Updated daily, the website, which is a leading resource on child rights issues, contains references to hundreds of publications, recent news and coming events, as well as details of organisations working worldwide for children. The site also includes reports submitted by NGOs to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

An email list service
Distributed more than twice a week, CRINMAIL provides regular news bulletin about child rights issues, as well as information about new publications and coming events.

A newsletter
Published three times per year, the newsletter is a thematic publication that examines a specific issue affecting children. It also summarises news, events and campaigns, and publications.

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Fax +44(0)20.7793.7628
Email info@crin.org

www.crin.org
Bookmark CRIN's website to learn more, or email us to contribute news or information.

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CRIN Newsletter

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5 **Editorial**

6 **News round-up**

8 **Follow-up on education**
8 Beyond the broken promises *by David Norman*
9 Campaign shines a light *by Alam Rahman*

11 **Children and Macroeconomics**
11 The big picture *by Stefan de Vylder*
13 Factfile: Macroeconomics and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
14 Figuring the case *by John Micklewright*
16 The rights way forward *by Judith Ennew*
17 Smart synergies *by Santosh Mehrotra*
18 Children first-the view from South Africa *by Mastoera Sadan*
20 Can child poverty be abolished in the UK? *by Tim Marsh*
21 Children in the European Union *by Bill Bell*
22 Factfile: European Union trade agreements and children
23 A bad business that fails to add up *by Rita Bhatia and Caroline Harper*
24 Factfile: Girls and macroeconomics
25 Banking on a joint action *by Zafiris Tzannatos*
26 Time to slow down financial globalisation *by Jenina Joy Chavez-Malaluan*
27 Zero interest for El Salvador's children *by Raul Moreno*
28 A clear case of relief *by Tony Burdon*
30 The debt we owe our children *by Jan Vandemoortele*
31 Factfile: Children and poverty
32 International aid-what's in it for children? *by Sheridan Bartlett*
34 When children are the losers *by Pham Thi Lan*

35 **Publications**
35 Thematic publications-children and macroeconomics
36 New publications-child rights

37 **Membership form**

39 **Calendar of events**

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Photo: Neil Cooper / Save the Children

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Editorial

Welcome to the Child Rights Information Network's newsletter. There has been a relaunch this edition, with a new design and format. You will notice more space is dedicated to thematic features, so that we can respond to the diverse interests of our members around the world. And while the changes are significant, it is not at the cost of continuity. The CRIN tradition of providing information to organisations or individuals interested in keeping abreast of child rights news, events, research, and publications is steadfastly upheld. We would be pleased to hear your views of the changes.

In other areas, CRIN's website is featuring the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children scheduled for September 2001. It will bring together government leaders, heads of state, NGOs, children's advocates and young people to review progress made since the World Summit on Children in 1990 and to renew that commitment. Also, following the International Conference on War Affected Children in Winnipeg, Canada last month, CRIN has launched an email list on Children and Armed Conflict.

This specially extended thirteenth edition of the newsletter, explores an important yet largely unexamined topic: the relationship between children's rights and macroeconomic analysis and policy. Our articles reveal and clarify this often hidden link and explain how children are likely to be affected by macroeconomic choices.

Stefan de Vylder and John Micklewright introduce the issues of children and macroeconomics. De Vylder explains how children bear most of the impact of fiscal and monetary policies, trade and exchange rate strategies, as well as those relating to adjustment and development. Micklewright illustrates the importance of giving a child dimension to economic variables and of introducing measures of child well-being to the framework of analysis.

We draw on examples from around the world to illustrate their conclusions. In South Africa, Vietnam, the Philippines, and the UK, authors analyse the impact on children of policies that aim to alleviate poverty. In El Salvador, we examine how structural adjustment programmes have increased poverty and social inequity. Other authors remind us that trade liberalisation, globalisation, and financial integration must place children ahead of economic prosperity. Two of our authors make strong statements in support of the cancellation of foreign debts.

The views of these authors provide an interesting complement to the challenge by citizens' groups of a global economic process that they say is controlled by transnational corporations, the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions. Following protests in Prague this September and Seattle last November, there is growing recognition that structural adjustment programmes and lending policies are driving millions of people including children around the world deeper into poverty and causing environmental destruction. Some argue that poor countries should be able to negotiate their own debt payments, after providing health care, education and basic services.

At the World Bank a new study of global poverty that was released this September adds greater recognition to the fact that "economic growth is crucial but often not sufficient to create conditions in which the world's poorest people can improve their lives".

Human development objectives and the best interests of the child should permeate macroeconomic policies. This might ease further distress in continuing catastrophes where NGOs, United Nations organisations and bilateral donors are called upon to provide humanitarian and relief assistance to victims of devastating macroeconomic policies. Further there is a greater need for corporations to ensure greater social responsibility in their operations and behaviour.

We hope that this issue of the CRIN Newsletter will contribute to the advancement of a debate that has, for too long, been divorced from the concerns of families and children. Childhood is a particularly vulnerable stage of the life cycle and children are especially sensitive to economic shocks. Conversely, children and their successful health and educational development are the cornerstones of long-term economic prosperity.

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State violence against children discussed

The Committee on the Rights of the Child concluded its three week autumn session, issuing its final observations on reports submitted by Finland, Burundi, the UK (Isle of Man), Tajikistan, Colombia, the Central African Republic, the Marshall Islands, Slovakia, and the Comoros.

The nine countries, in keeping with their obligations as states parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, presented the Committee with written reports on their efforts to promote children's rights, and sent government delegations to discuss the documents and answer questions from the Committee's ten independent experts.

Over the course of its current session, the Committee held a day-long discussion on the subject of "state violence against children", in which government representatives, inter- and non-governmental organisations and other international bodies participated. The Committee adopted recommendations calling for an in-depth study to be carried out on the issue of state violence against children, and for exploration of the different types of violent treatment where children were victims to identify their causes, the extent of such violence, and its impact on children. It urged states parties, among other things, to repeal any legislation that allowed the imposition of unacceptable sentences for offences committed before the age of 18.

The Committee's next session, its twenty sixth, will be held from 8 to 26 January 2001 (see calendar of events in this newsletter for more details).

Source: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Preparations underway for Children's Special Session

The First Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session on Children was held from 30 May to 2 June. It was one of three planning meetings for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children which will be held in September 2001 to mark the tenth anniversary of the World Summit for Children and review achievements.

International and national NGOs attended the session. A Child Rights Caucus was organised by the task group on child rights of the NGO Committee for UNICEF and Human Rights Watch. Operations of this caucus, which is lead by a small and elected co-ordinating group are continuing between prepatory committees.

Three key outcomes for children were proposed to guide the work of the Special Session and to help develop strategies for children for the next ten years and beyond. They are (1) a good start in life, nurturing, caring and a safe environment, (2) the opportunity to complete a good, quality education, (3) the opportunity for adolescents to develop fully their individual capacities in safe and enabling environments.

At the World Summit in 1990 governments endorsed a global plan of action and adopted the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. The Second Substantive session takes place from 29 January to 2 February 2000 (see calender of events for details).

Adapted from UNICEF and the Child Rights Caucus. CRIN has launched a theme desk for the Special Session at http://www.crin.org/features/ungass

Optional protocols to Convention open for signature

More than 63 countries have signed the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child relating to children in armed conflict and the trafficking of children. The first protocol requires states to agree that no one under the age of 18 take direct part in hostilities or be compulsorily recruited into armed forces. It also requires states to raise the minimum age and apply strict safeguards to voluntary recruitment. The second protocol prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Canada, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have ratified the protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict; and 68 other states have signed it. Bangladesh has ratified the protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and 63 others have signed it.

The date of entry into force of the two separate protocols has not yet been determined. The two separate protocols shall enter into force three months after the deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession, and for each state one month after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession. The protocols were adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 25 May 2000.

Sources: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Beijing +5 reviews progress for women and girls

There has been progress for girls and women in the last five years, but obstacles remain. This was the main conclusion of the UN General Assembly Special Session for Women in June after progress reports from governments were heard.

UNICEF and the NGO International Network for Girls organised a symposium on the topic of "girls as their own advocates". It allowed girls the opportunity to present testimonies on broad-ranging issues that affect them including armed conflict, child trafficking, community participation, reproductive health, female genital mutilation, and community participation. A panel discussion on the role of media in influencing and limiting girls' choices also included direct participation from girls.

In 1995, governments had met in Beijing and adopted the Beijing Platform for Action. It details 12 critical areas of concern that relate to the human rights of women and girls.

Child labour treaty

The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour enters into force on 19 November 2000. The treaty requires that states ban children from working in dangerous jobs such as mining and in illegal occupations such as prostitution, pornography and drug trafficking. Signatories include United States of America, Canada, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil and Mexico. As of 4 October 2000, 32 countries have ratified the treaty to ban the worst forms of child labour, which is the largest number of signatories for any labour agreement in a single year. The ILO Convention was adopted in June 1999.

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African Charter on children's rights

The entry into force of the first regional treaty on the rights of the child - the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children's Charter) - is another positive step towards securing the protection of children's rights.

"The human rights of African children are violated every day of their lives, with severe consequences which extend well beyond their childhood," Amnesty International said.

The African Children's Charter codifies the responsibilities of the state, community and individual in the protection of the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of the child.

States parties will be required to submit reports to an 11-member African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (the Committee), who will monitor compliance with the African Children's Charter. The Committee will be empowered to receive complaints from any person, group or non-governmental organisation recognised by the OAU relating to any matter covered by the treaty. It will also be able to resort to any appropriate method of investigating matters falling within the ambit of the treaty.

The African Children's Charter was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1990. However it was not until 29 November 1999 that the fifteenth country ratified the Charter, thereby allowing the treaty to enter into force. Presently only 21 out of 53 states of the OAU have ratified the African Children Charter. Despite the fact that the African Children Charter entered into force last year, African governments failed to establish the Committee at the last OAU summit in Lome, Togo in July 2000, due to the lack of candidates nominated by states parties. Only Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritius, Senegal and Togo nominated a total of seven candidates for the election to the Committee of 11 members. The next OAU summit will take place in June 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia.

Source: Amnesty International

International AIDS conference concludes in South Africa

At the closing ceremony of the thirteenth International AIDS Conference in Durban, former South African President Nelson Mandela called for urgent steps to protect the country's children from the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He said that unless the spread of the disease is curbed, it will only get worse, and children will bear the brunt of the impact. There are an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 orphans in South Africa. By 2005, the figure could reach 1.5 million.

"These are not cold statistics," Mandela said. "We are talking about children looking to adults for help. Some are infected and have to learn to live with the disease ... others have to live with the death of family members and siblings."

The AIDS conference took place in July 2000 and brought together for the first time all key players in the pandemic — from HIV-infected children to prostitutes, UN officials, world-renown immunologists and Nobel laureates. The next international AIDS forum will be held in Spain in 2002.

Source: UN Foundation

International conference on war affected children

The weeklong International Conference on War-Affected Children in Winnipeg, Canada, ended with an agreement to free abducted African children and a 14-point action plan to safeguard the rights of war-affected children. Representatives from more than 120 nations attended the conference.

Sudan and Uganda agreed to cooperate in returning 6,000 children kidnapped by the Lord's Resistance Army, a Sudanese rebel force. Canada and Egypt mediated the deal. It remains to be seen whether these commitments will be fulfilled.

The "Agenda for War-Affected Children" adopted at the conference called for all states to implement measures to aid children affected by war, hold child-rights violators accountable, assess the effects of sanctions on children and add child protection units to peacekeeping missions. The agenda was co-sponsored by UNICEF and Canada and will be presented at the UN Special Session on Children next September.

Graca Machel, author of a UN-commissioned report on the plight of children in conflicts presented at the conference, criticised the ministerial action plan for not going far enough. Two separate reports from 50 youth delegates and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) called for tough deadlines for the imposition of international bans on using and abusing children in conflicts and stringent sanctions against any groups that violate the bans. The ministerial action plan did not include these items.

Source: UN Foundation

Nepal conference for the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

In May representatives of 24 governments, including 16 from the Asia-Pacific region together with nearly 100 NGOs, gathered in Kathmandu Nepal for the first conference on the use of child soldiers in the region.

Drawing on research prepared by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, the conference explored the dimensions of the problem in the region, its root causes and effects. The conference also focussed on practical strategies for the prevention of child soldiering and the effective demobilisation and rehabilitation of children subjected to this abuse. Lessons were learnt from other regions and related fields of child labour, trafficking and exploitation. The conference issued a declaration of strong support for the new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention 182. They also called on governments and armed groups to demobilise and stop recruiting under 18s, and urged tighter controls on small arms flows including sanctions against suppliers.

The coalition is now organising a middle East initiative, with a Regional conference planned for March 2001.

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Beyond the broken promises

The World Education Forum in Dakar did not deliver but, as Save the Children UK's Dave Norman reports, organisations concerned with children's rights now have a chance they cannot let slip.

Follow-up on education

In advance of the World Education Forum in April 2000, edition 12 of the CRIN Newsletter focused on education. Here two authors present their views on the successes and failures of the meeting. The website of the World Education Forum and the Dakar Framework of Action are at www.unesco.org/wef

The World Education Forum was not judged a success by the majority of non-governmental organisations who attended it this spring.

The three-day meeting in Dakar, Senegal, proved a disappointment for my organisation, Save the Children. Speech after speech in the plenary sessions turned the forum into a media event that obliterated constructive dialogue that would have led to effective action.

Even the limited opportunities afforded to delegates to share their experiences with the drafting committee ended in dead-end discussions. The final Dakar Framework for Action failed to incorporate the summaries of round-table debates by delegates or to reflect the richness of practical NGO experience.

Ironically the draft Framework for Action had included some of this richness in the run-up to Dakar. Yet it was lost there in a fog of disputes and failures to reach agreements. The Dakar Framework for Action has ended up as an executive summary, not an action plan, outlining six goals backed up by 12 brief "strategies".

But all is far from lost. New opportunities have emerged from the Dakar process, with governments and donors committing themselves to goals that are stronger than the original Jomtein targets drawn up in 1990. Primary education, for example, must be completely free, compulsory and of good quality. Donors pledged that "no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources".

There was also a broad recognition by speakers in Dakar that the 1990s' emphasis on enrolments had often been at the expense of quality. There is now much greater interest on the practical - of finding such ways to make education useful for children.

The challenge is now is to set up real mechanisms that can achieve these bold commitments. The door is open on two fronts. First, the international community will be required to develop "with immediate effect" a global initiative aimed at developing the strategies and mobilising the resources needed to support national efforts. Advocacy efforts at international meetings, such as the G8 summit and annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank, will aim to move donors on from merely endorsing the Dakar framework and to translating their pledges into more meaningful proposals and strategies.

Most importantly, though, civil society has been given a leading role for the first time. Governments in Dakar agreed to "develop or strengthen existing national plans of action by 2002 at the latest... through more transparent and democratic processes involving stakeholders, especially people's representatives, community leaders, parents, learners, NGOs and civil society."

At Dakar, there emerged an enthusiasm to listen and learn from the experienced civil society groups that were represented there; and the majority of government delegations held detailed discussions with NGO representatives from their countries. Undoubtedly this offers an unprecedented opportunity for organisations concerned with child rights to shape the direction of governments' education programme as national action plans are developed over the next two years.

David Norman is education advocacy adviser at Save the Children UK

Photo: Neil Cooper / Save the Children

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What next after Dakar? The Global Campaign for Education, says Alam Rahman, and no one will be let off its hook.

The World Education Forum marked the end of the dismal decade where the promise of Education for All by the year 2000 came and went unrealised.

The numbers make familiar but unacceptable reading: 880 million adults unable to read or write, more than 125 million children never inside a classroom, 150 million children dropping out of school in the first couple of years.

Determined to stop the pattern, the Global Campaign for Education was launched before the start of the World Education Forum to "mobilise public pressure on governments to fulfil their promises to provide free, quality education for all people, in particular children and women". The campaign, which is continuing, is led by Oxfam International, ActionAid, Education International, the Global March Against Child Labour, and several southern-based education networks.

In the months leading up to Dakar, one of the Global Campaign for Education's central demands was that more resources be earmarked for education; by the time of the conference many key players had agreed to the principle that no good national education plan should fail for lack of resources. An important demand was that civil society be involved throughout the process; and most governments accepted that people's participation must not be neglected. The World Bank announced a fast-track programme of accelerated funding for countries with a serious commitment to education. The UNDP and UNICEF endorsed the campaign and lobbied for the same goals. And in the background, the interests of civil society were represented by the Global Campaign for Education in bargaining over the final Dakar Framework of Action.

So what happened? Certainly not everything that one might have hoped for, but on the whole not a bad result. The Dakar Framework for Action strongly reaffirmed the goal of ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to and are able to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. The director-general of UNESCO will convene a high level meeting annually to keep up the pressure. Governments have agreed to prepare comprehensive National Education For All plans by 2002 at the latest, and to involve civil society in every step of the process. The final text of the conference affirms that "no country seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal for lack of resources". The Dakar Framework further states that the international community will launch with immediate effect "a global initiative aimed at developing the strategies and mobilising the resources needed to provide effective support to national efforts".

Still, the bottom line is that governments did not commit. The Global Campaign for Education had pushed for all governments to commit four per cent of GDP to basic education and demanded that donor governments target eight per cent of their aid budgets to the same. Governments weren't ready to make that commitment, preferring instead to remain unaccountable. The new global initiative was given no structure or schedule, so no one can say what or when it will deliver. Without significant delegation of authority to southern governments, it could simply become just another forum for the same old donor politics.

Weak in some sections and strong in others, the text of the Dakar Framework can be considered a mixed success. The ultimate test is what happens now. As one participant put it, "the real difference between Dakar and the last education forum in 1990 was the presence of civil society and a sense that the debate on Education for All was public rather than a private affair for government technocrats". The challenge is to organise and agitate now, knowing that, without strong and sustained public pressure, the promises made in Dakar will evaporate. As Tom Bediako of Education International (who helped found the campaign) said in his closing address, the Global Campaign for Education will "haunt governments and multilaterals and continue to hold them to account".

Alam Rahman works with the Global March Against Child Labour.
Information about the Global Campaign on Education is available on the Oxfam website at www.oxfam.org

Photos: Neil Cooper / Save the Children

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Photo: B. Reed / Magnum Photos

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Macroeconomics have a direct impact on children's lives, but the links are only starting to be recognised. CRIN's guest writer Stefan de Vylder draws some disturbing connections and argues early action is the answer.

Macroeconomic policies are rarely discussed in connection with children. This means that most people working for the rights of the child regard macroeconomics with indifference or suspicion; and most of the work of economists is blind to children's needs.

Globally, young people under the age of 18 represent one third of the world"s population, and in many developing countries children constitute the majority. Still, economic decisions very rarely take into account the interests of the child, or the impact on them. Indeed children do not merit even a mention in most major economic textbooks. At best, there is a paragraph or two about "human capital" and the importance of investing in education.

The children's own voices are never heard, despite the fact that many economic decisions directly or indirectly affect them.

There is no such thing as "child-neutral" economic policies. There is a need to make children more visible in economic policy-making. There is also great scope for better cooperation and understanding between economists and children, and between economists and advocacy groups working on children's behalf.

Economic analysis can be used to demonstrate that good economic policies and the best interest of the child often go hand-in-hand, and that while the financial costs of creating a more child-friendly society are often small, the social and economic benefits of linking these interests are enormous. To invest in children is a win-win strategy: the individual child and society benefit as a whole.

To illustrate the ways in which economic policies affect the situation of children, imagine a set of concentric circles moving outwards (see Figure 1). At the hub are policies and legislation that explicitly target children including public provision of primary health and education, and regulations against the exploitation of child labour.

Figure 1. The Child at the Centre.

Source: de Vylder, 2000

In a second circle are policies and institutions that have a strong but less direct impact. Here are traditional social security and welfare policies, most redistributive tax and public expenditure policies, and in general, policies that directly affect the family.

In a third circle are macroeconomic policies in a conventional sense where the impact may be more indirect, but still strong. This includes fiscal policies (policies related to taxes and government expenditure); monetary policies (which influence the interest, inflation and exchange rates), as well as trade policies, the managing of external capital flows and the foreign debt.

In a final circle is the overall policy environment or framework, including the choice of development strategy and the globalisation process.

While the policies in the inner circle are usually discussed in connection with the rights of the child, policies belonging to the outer circles also affect children either directly or indirectly through their effect on the family's economic and social situation. There are examples where the links between macroeconomic policies and children demonstrate the direct impact the one has on the other. The relationship between trade liberalisation and child labour in export industries is an obvious example.

The choice between inflation and unemployment represents the classic dilemma of macroeconomic policies. Far from being child neutral, inflation affects countries, social classes and age groups in quite different ways. In high and medium-income countries with relatively well-developed financial markets, young families with children tend to finance the purchase of new homes with the help of credit from the formal credit market. Among low-income households, especially in poor countries, money for a new house is often raised on the informal credit market, which includes relatives, friends or local moneylenders. Generally, debts are incurred by families when children are small and repaid when the children have grown up.

For this reason, moderate inflationary policies tend to have a less negative impact on young families with children, who are often indebted. The erosion of their debts through inflation may even be in their interest. On the other hand, austere monetary policies, which reduce the rate of inflation while raising the real rate of interest, tend to be particularly harmful for young parents with children.

Monetary policies leading to high real rates of interest can thus be labelled child-hostile, since they have a direct bearing on the affordability of acceptable dwellings. Moreover, if there is a choice between some inflation and unemployment, many young families would probably prefer more employment, even if this were to mean a slightly higher inflation.

This would make sense since there is a wealth of evidence that suggests that unemployment (especially long-term) is very harmful to children economically, socially, and psychologically.

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In poor countries the effects of unemployment can be dramatic because economic margins are small or non-existent. The child's very right to survival may be threatened by the parents' unemployment. In addition to suffering severe economic loss, family disintegration often tends to follow. Clearly, these associated costs of unemployment, which include family disintegration and, possibly increased child labour, rising drop-out rates and even juvenile delinquency due to parents unemployment, are not fully captured in conventional economic analyses.

An anti-poverty, child-friendly strategy must therefore pay much attention to job creation without embarking on imprudent policies that lead to a high rate of inflation. Parents need employment in order to support their children; and children and adolescents need to feel that education is a worthwile investment and that they will be welcome in the labour market.

Fiscal policies, or policies related to taxes and government expenditure, are at the core of macroeconomic policy choices. A state budget reflects the overall priorities of the government. It is essentially a political not a technical instrument as it translates policies and political platforms into expenditures and taxes. The analysis of state budgets is of paramount importance in order to assess the links between macroeconomic policies and children. The choices behind state budgets have an impact on children's lives both directly and indirectly.

Children are affected indirectly by budget expenditures and revenues, which determine the development of fiscal deficits or surpluses, the sources of finance, and the amount of foreign borrowing. These fiscal policies influence inflation, unemployment, income distribution, foreign debt obligations, taxes, and subsidies that affect the families' social and economic situation and consequently children.

State budgets can have a direct impact in areas of concern for children such as: nutrition, child and maternal health, water and sanitation, early childhood development and basic education, social welfare, leisure and cultural activities, and child protection measures.

From a child's perspective, massive foreign indebtedness is exceedingly harmful. Foreign credit may appear a comfortable short-term option and, if the borrowed money is invested wisely, may have some positive long-terms effects. But taking up foreign loans today also implies a mortgaging of the future and often boils down to theft from tomorrow's children and adolescents who will have to repay the debts.

External economic policies such as trade policies, the managing of external capital flows and of foreign debt, and, more broadly, the so-called process of globalisation fall into the definition of macroeconomics and do impact children. Structural adjustment programmes and foreign debt are good examples of how macroeconomic policies can neglect children's rights.

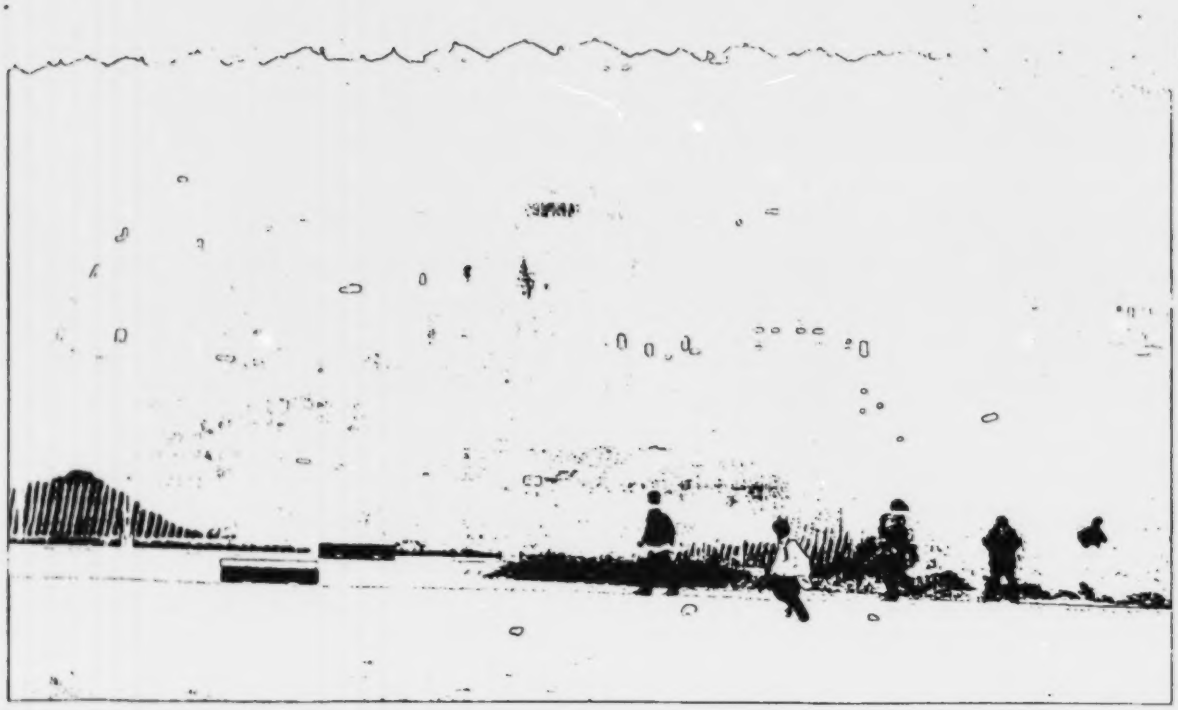

Photo: Caroline Penn / Save the Children

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Many structural adjustment programmes have been designed in open contradiction to provisions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 28 of the Convention, for example, states in unequivocal terms that governments have the obligation to "make primary education compulsory and available free to all". The introduction of school fees, which has often accompanied structural adjustment, is simply incompatible with the CRC.

In a large number of other areas such as health and social security, structural adjustment programmes often neglect the priority that children's rights should be given. In general, structural adjustment involves a change in relative "prices" between paid and unpaid work in favour of paid work. Invisible work done by women is not counted and, when compared with production for the market, the reproductive and caretaking burdens normally shouldered by women are devalued.

Therefore, for parents the combined additional costs of raising children and the need to generate additional cash income provide strong incentives for children leaving school and contributing to family income at an earlier age than before. A common pattern sees the girl child as the main loser when school fees are introduced or when unemployment obliges the family to take children out of school.

In order to safeguard the best interest of the child a change in emphasis in macroeconomic policy-making is needed. Child-friendly economic strategies and policies should be characterised by:
- emphasis on equity and policies that support an inclusive, broad-based and participatory pattern of growth;
- predictability and stability;
- emphasis on human development and the accumulation of social capital and trust, which includes great attention to the needs of the reproductive and community spheres of the economy;
- emphasis on job creation, and job security;
- cautious and sustainable foreign debt policies, including a strong emphasis on avoidance of the debt trap;
- a very long-term perspective.

The point to stress here is that macroeconomic policies are far from age- or gender-neutral. A perspective, which recognises the rights of children and women, has to be present *while* macroeconomic policies are being designed, not *after* they are finalised. The best interest of the child should permeate macroeconomic policies, embracing fiscal policies, monetary policies, and exchange rate policies, as early and as comprehensively as possible. It is not enough to advocate that a larger share of public expenditure goes to social sector development. Trade and exchange rate policies may have more of an impact on child development than, for example, the relative size of the state budget allocated to health and education.

It is imperative to avoid the situation where hard core economic policies are decided in isolation from human development objectives while NGOs, United Nations organisations and bilateral donors are called upon to look after humanitarian aspects and give relief assistance to victims of devastating macroeconomic policies.

Dr Stefan de Vylder is associate professor in development economics and currently working as an independent consultant. He has written *Macroeconomic Policies and Children's Rights* (2000), Stockholm: Rädda Barnen.

Children and macroeconomics in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

In implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child economic resources have an important role to play. Article 4, on implementation of rights in the Convention (which is also called the umbrella article) sets out States' overall obligations to implement all the rights in the Convention. It reads:

State parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources, and where needed, with the framework of international cooperation.

Other articles in the Convention also have application:
- Article 5. Parental guidance and the child's evolving capacities.
- Article 6. The child's right to life and maximum survival and development.
- Article 18. Parents' joint responsibility assisted by the state.
- Article 23. The rights of disabled children.
- Article 26. The child's right to benefit from social security.
- Article 27. The child's right to an adequate standard of living.
- Article 28. The child's right to education.
- Article 29. The aims of education.

Integrating child rights into economic policy formulations require tools for analysis. Statistical information is required by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Guidelines for Periodic Reports. This includes variations between areas of the country and between groups of children. As well it includes changes in the status of children, changes in budget allocations and expenditure for sectors serving children; and changes in the extent of international cooperation received or contributed for the realisation of children's rights.

These guidelines outline that for the implementation of article 4, further statistical information is required including information on:
- proportion of budget devoted to social services expenditures for children, including health, welfare and education, at the central, regional and local levels, and where appropriate at the federal and provincial levels.
- proportion of international aid at the multilateral and bilateral levels allocated to programmes from children and the promotion of their rights and, where appropriate, the assistance received from regional and international financial institutions.

Adapted from "Implementation of Rights in the Convention: Article 4" in Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1998), New York.

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Precise data about children's lives can help put their needs at the centre of macroeconomic debates. John Micklewright sums up.

World events constantly remind us of this simple truth: the real purpose of economic policy is to improve people's lives.

In the European Union, creating the single European currency stresses that the purpose of closer integration is to raise the standard of living and quality of life of Europe's citizens. Similarly the goal of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is to raise the living standards of more than 400 million people and develop more humane and democratic societies. Free markets and the reduction of the role of the state are two of the instruments to achieve those goals and are important aspects of the transition process. But, they, in themselves, are not the ultimate aims of what is taking place.

So, given economic policy is about improving the lives of people, the first step in linking macroeconomics and children is a simple one. Data can be harnessed effectively to highlight the quantitative importance of the child population. Children and young people under 18 are far from being a group of marginal importance (see Figure 1). Overall, 37 per cent of the world's population are children. In Africa, children actually form the majority of the population, while in Europe nearly 25 per cent of the people are children. They form a large fraction of the world's population. While figures of this kind may be familiar to advocates and researchers working on behalf of children, my impression is that they are not well-known to many of those responsible for economic policy.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of households in the European Union that have a child aged 0-18. The average figure for countries is one third, with Spain and Ireland registering over 40 per cent. Demographic data about children are readily available and their various uses should form a key part in any strategy aiming to raise the profile of children in economic debate.

Economic statistics that form part of the macroeconomic debate fall under various headings, including budgets, interest rates, prices, incomes and labour markets.

Government budgets can be broken down so that estimates can be made regarding the proportion devoted to children. The figures will be sensitive to the assumptions made to attribute expenditures that are clearly identified with children, but this does not mean that this exercise should not be attempted. Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that even expenditures which are clearly aimed at adults often bring benefits to children.

Any discussion of government budgets and children needs to recognise that in many countries expenditure relevant to children is decentralised, especially where health and education are concerned. A concern with child well-being thus implies a strong interest in systems of intergovernmental transfers that redistribute income from richer regions to poorer regions or down to local government.

Interest rates and prices are key macroeconomic variables. In commenting in a recent UNICEF report on the mechanisms required to trace the impact of monetary union in Europe on children, Oxford economist Tony Atkinson notes that measures are needed of the cost of borrowing for families, just as they have been developed for the cost of borrowing for businesses. Macroeconomic models feature *the* interest rate, but anyone who needs to borrow money knows that the cost of credit may vary enormously. A price index for families with children will differ from one for pensioners due to the differences in expenditure patterns. (Atkinson calls for a European price index for families with children.)

Photo: Patamalia Peters

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National income per head is only a rough guide to the average income of families with children. The position of households with children *within* the income distribution is key. The USA has the highest GNP per capita of any large country, but despite this it ranks number 12 in a group of 25 industrialised countries in terms of the proportion of its children living in absolute poverty.

The unemployment rate is a standard measure of whether a country's labour market is strong or weak. But more relevant for child well-being is the proportion of children living in a household where no adult works. Changes in the overall unemployment rate may not be a good guide to this. In fact, in several European countries the jobless household rate has moved in a different way to that of the unemployment one. In the UK unemployment fell by over three per cent from 1985-96, but the rate of households with children where no adult was in work rose by over four per cent.

Also important are direct measures of the children the well-being of children themselves. Information about living standards at the household level, for example household income, is not enough if we wish to know how the children within each household are faring. Policy directed towards children may involve targeting resources at mothers rather than fathers. Data supplying direct measures of child well-being should not only allow the position of children relative to adults to be assessed, but should also show differences between children. Particularly important are the variations between boys and girls.

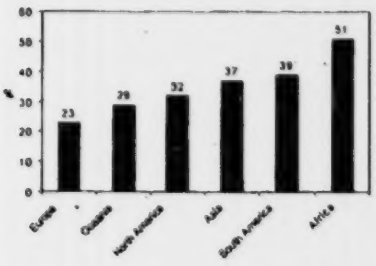
To assess the impact of any economic policy, aspects of child well-being that need to be measured include material well-being, survival and health, education and development, and social inclusion (especially for adolescents). Broadly speaking, these dimensions are contained in the UNDP Human Development Index and its derivatives and they reflect the approach to human well-being of the 1998 Nobel Laureate in Economics, Amartya Sen who has placed emphasis on the capabilities of people to function and thrive in life.

Let's take one example, that of survival and health. A number of indicators are relevant to this and UNICEF's annual publication *State of the World's Children* ranks countries by their under-five mortality rate. Together with infant and maternal mortality, this is of major importance in its own right, but is also correlated with other dimensions of well-being for which data are less available. Indeed, like demographic data, mortality data often have the attraction of being relatively abundant and up-to-date. Child mortality responds well to investment in basic social services and to the raising of the incomes of the poor. Mortality data are of considerable help in throwing light on countries' economic success or failure. Immunisation rates are another indicator of considerable use and may have the advantage over mortality data of responding more quickly to economic adjustment.

Economic policy is about improving the lives of people and the most basic data of all, demographic, can be used to underline this fact. The key economic variables on which economic policy operates can all be given a child dimension. Add to this the use of direct measures to assess various aspects of child well-being and you can build a powerful picture of the reality of children's lives and a persuasive method for influencing macroeconomic policies.

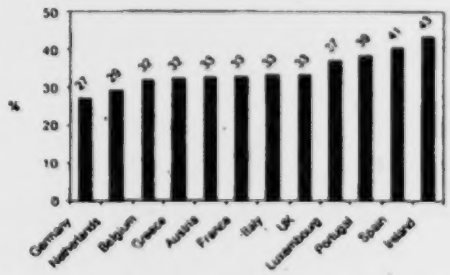
John Micklewright is head of research at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. This article is a summary of the paper titled "Macroeconomic Data and Children" (2000) and has been published with the permission of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Figure 1.
Children (aged 0-18) in the world's population (%)



Source: UNICEF, State of the World Children, 1998
in UNICEF, Macroeconomic Data and Children, 2000

Figure 2.
Proportion of households in EU countries with children (aged 0-18) (%)



Source: Labour Force Survey Results 1999, Eurostat in UNICEF, Macroeconomic Data and Children, 2000

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The rights way forward

Judith Ennew explains how rights can broaden our understanding of children's position within the economy.

The modern concept of childhood excludes children from economic life by insisting they are economically dependent on adults and that they confine their activities to the spheres of education and play.

This concept also decrees that they do no work, have no political views and possess no money. Yet this construct of childhood bears little relation to the lives of most children in most countries today. For example, children throughout the world work and produce value, yet their labour is not counted when Gross Domestic Products (GDP) are calculated. Children are also significant consumers who make purchases with their own money according to their own tastes and also shop on behalf of their families. And while the work that children do in school represents a significant contribution to future wealth for themselves, their families and their nations, schooling appears only as a cost in national budgets as opposed to a gain.

Economic rights are not generally thought of as rights that children exercise. One exception to this is child labour and cases where child workers negotiate their levels of pay. Yet even here there are limitations. Child labour campaigns tend to concentrate on protecting and rescuing children, rather than supporting their economic rights as workers. This reduces child workers to victims and objects of concern, rather than valuing them as producers of goods and as economic actors in their own right.

Apart from studies of child labour, most economic research on children examines the social costs of childhood although there is now an emerging body of research on the economic ideas of children in the West. This research tends to follow conventional approaches derived from child development; and the advantage for planners includes that it is possible to analyse and predict trends in saving and consuming behaviour. But there are limitations to these approaches to children's economic rights. Like child labour debates, both are reductionist. Both genres of research, examining the social cost of childhood and the economic ideas of children, treat childhood as important only in terms of the adults that children will become.

However, a human rights framework permits other perspectives of children's economic rights, particularly if the guiding principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are taken seriously. Article 4, for example, obliges governments to fulfil children's rights to the maximum extent of their available resources, not just after all other population groups have been provided for and not considering children as a cost to society. Thus education, health and protection are rights, rather than privileges or favours bestowed by adults. Also, under the various CRC provisions for family life and adequate standards of living, states must support parents and guardians to ensure that children's rights are secured.

It follows from this that part of the proper business of governance is to develop information bases for routine 'children's budgets and audits' that demonstrate the way in which fiscal decisions have an impact on children's lives at all levels. Information about the contribution children make to national income would be a normal component of these data, as would their opinions on the way national budgets affect their enjoyment of rights.

Judith Ennew is with the Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge

Photo: Dave Mitchell / Save the Children

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Governments don't have to have booming economies before they can set up good quality basic social services for all their people. Santosh Mehrotra offers alternatives.

During the course of world summits and global conferences in the 1990s, the international community took a significant step by declaring its commitment to making basic social services (BSS) universally available.

That pledge covered health (including reproductive health, low-cost water and sanitation) and basic education. While some progress has been made, the truth remains that access is far from universal and the results of inadequate and inferior services, especially for children in the developing countries, are there for all to see.

A UNICEF study of more than 30 developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America has just been completed and it reveals how much governments and donors are spending on basic services, the equity of that spending, and its efficiency and effectiveness.

Governments often make proud claims about how much they spend on health and education, when in fact not all such services benefit the poor. By denying citizens access to the basic services, governments often violate their citizens' human rights.

There is a synergy between these social interventions and income poverty reduction, social development and economic growth. Interventions in any one of these will have an impact on all the others. By utilising these synergies, many countries have achieved unusually good results in social development early in their development process relative to their level of income. These high-achievers demonstrate that it is possible to address the non-income dimensions of poverty and improve social indicators regardless of the level of economic growth. Approximately $206 to $216 billion (in 1995 prices) is needed to provide basic social services to all, but only $136 billion is currently being spent. Expenditure falls short by about $70 to $80 billion per year.

The new doctrines of so-called small government and extreme fiscal austerity followed in many developing countries flatly contradict the historical experience of the industrialised world. In order for developing countries to grow, their governments will have to grow. However, the experience of developing countries over the last 50 years shows that economic growth does not always reduce poverty.

Ten steps are needed to close the gap between the rhetoric about good quality basic social services and their universal availability:

1. Universal access to BSS is possible regardless of the level of per capita income – that is the lesson for policy makers from the experience of the high-achievers.
2. The historical experience of both industrialized and high-achieving developing countries demonstrates that the state must guarantee BSS for all.
3. Relying on economic growth to eventually trickle down to the social sectors is inimical to the first call for children.
4. Contrary to past practice, macro-economic stabilisation can be achieved while protecting the social by inter-sectoral reallocations, and larger revenues.
5. The synergies emanating from an integrated package of BSS, focused on the whole child, can be sectors, especially the basic level.
6. Most governments possess little information on public spending on BSS, hampering policy decisions.
7. Additional resources can be mobilized for BSS by intra-sectoral reallocation within the social sectors, tapped to increase efficiency and reduce costs.
8. The relevant ministries of donor governments need to achieve consistency between aid policies on the one hand and trade policies on the other.
9. There should be greater effort by donor countries, especially the largest donors, to increase ODA as well as its share to basic services.
10. There should be greater effort by donor countries to end the burden of the debt on the HIPC countries to release resources for basic services.

Santosh Mehrotra is senior economic adviser at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

Photo: Roger Lemoyne / UNICEF

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New research sheds valuable light on the importance given to alleviating child poverty and the obstacles to success. Mastoera Sadan reports.

The South African government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1995, promising to place children first in its efforts to alleviate poverty.

So now the government is obligated towards fulfilling the CRC commitment and to undertake measures to meet children's economic, social and cultural rights to the maximum extent of available resources.

This pledge to children is clearly reflected in section 28 of the Bill of Rights which enshrines children's rights in the South African Constitution and in the government's National Programme of Action for Children in South Africa (NPA). The NPA provides a framework that promotes and aims to protect the rights of the child. This framework tries to ensure that children's needs remain a priority for policy makers and government officials responsible for resource allocation and service delivery. Through the process of the NPA, the government aims to integrate children's needs into all budgetary decisions thereby mainstreaming children in the government's poverty alleviation strategy.

Children make up over 47 per cent of South Africa's population, yet still suffer from poor nutrition, inadequate health services, clean water, sanitation and basic education. The budget is the government's most important economic tool as it translates political priorities and policies into expenditure and delivery of services. Budgetary programmes, specifically socio-economic expenditures, affect the well-being and life opportunities of children directly. The South African government's commitment to social service delivery for children in the face of many competing needs highlights the importance of the government budget in alleviating child poverty.

The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA)s Children's Budget Project monitors and evaluates the South African government's implementation of the CRC through its National Programme of Action. The project undertakes research that tracks government spending on basic social service programmes targeted towards children in the key social sectors of health, welfare and education. The research paints a national picture and provides baseline data on children and budgets. In addition it reveals government spending on children through the development of an indicator framework that monitors outlay.

Although the provision of many services needed by children involves the collaboration of two or more sectors, research is undertaken sector by sector. As budgets are drawn up along departmental lines, this approach, while recognising the intersectoral nature of service provision to children, ensures the link between departmental responsibility and allocation of limited resources towards children.

Photo: Eli Reed / Magnum Photos

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The research:
- identifies sector policy priorities by evaluating current service delivery to children through an historical and sector situation analysis;
- collates and presents detailed department budgetary data;
- analyses the extent to which departmental budgets at the programme level reflect the shift in policy priorities;
- proposes opportunities for further reprioritisation;
- recommends improvements in service delivery towards children;
- identifies specific indicators that may be used to monitor shifts in government spending on children.

Most recently, the Children's Budget Project analysed government commitment to child poverty alleviation examining whether children are prioritised in policy, legislation, budgets and service delivery in the health, welfare, education and justice sectors.

The research findings indicate that there is a plethora of policies and legislation aimed at improving the well-being of children that has been put in place since the first democratic government was elected in 1994.

In budgetary allocations children are given priority to some extent, through transfers such as the child support grant in the welfare sector; increases in expenditures in the department of justice's services to fight against child sex abuse and gang crime in poor communities and increases in the real value of the income of poor households reliant on pension payment.

However, the main obstacle to children fully realising their rights is the problems impeding service delivery. These include lack of access to services due to cost and distance, poor and differential quality of services, inadequate infrastructure and limited human and material resources.

Children are the majority of both today's and tomorrow's population in South Africa. Placing children at the centre of the economic process and monitoring the implementation of the CRC by examining resource allocation makes an important contribution to the children's rights debate and allows for sustainable socio-economic development for all peoples in South Africa.

Mastoera Sadan is project manager of the Children's Budget Project at IDASA

Photo: Eli Reed / Magnum Photos

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Can child poverty be abolished in the UK?

Tim Marsh takes a hard look at a recent government pledge.

Article 27 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to "a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social well being".

Yet, according to a recent UNICEF report *Child Poverty in Rich Nations* the UK has the fourth largest incidence of relative child poverty amongst industrialised nations. A fifth of the UK's children lived in poverty in the 1990s. Government figures indicated that in 1998/1999 there were 4.5 million children living in poverty, contrasting with 1.4 million in 1979. At the same time, child poverty in most industrialised countries has remained static or fallen in the last 20 years.

Children who grow up in poverty have poorer attendance records at school and are less likely to continue into further education. They are more likely to have poor standards of literacy and numeracy. These differences are apparent from when they are 22 months old. As they grow up they are also more likely to earn lower hourly wages, become unemployed, go to prison or become single parents.

The scale of the problem in the UK was recognised by the government in 1999. With increasing evidence that poverty passes on from generation to generation, the government announced its "historic aim to end child poverty in the UK by 2020". *Opportunity for All* was released in 1999. It is the first of what are to be annual reports on poverty and social exclusion. The report, which commits the government to ending poverty in 20 years and halving it within 10, contained a range of indicators of poverty including absolute and relative income, health, housing, crime, lone-parenthood, and educational achievement.

But while a multi-dimensional approach to tackling poverty is necessary, the Child Poverty Action Group also believes it is crucial that the government recognises the importance of adequate income. A "minimum income standard" could be set at what the government considered to be a "minimum level of decent living without major deprivations or exclusions and the income level, which gives access to it". The statistical measure of poverty most commonly used by it is the "half of average incomes after housing costs"(Households Below Average Income) measure. While HBAI is a useful measure of inequality, it is not a measure of income adequacy.

The government has acknowledged the extra cost of children and directed extra support to households with children. Child benefits which are payable to all families has risen by up to 36 per cent. The government has introduced Working Families Tax Credits, which are in-work benefits that guarantee a minimum income for households with children. The government estimates that by 2001 the extra spending on children will amount to £6 billion.

Achieving full employment has also been the main focus of the government's measures to end child poverty. The introduction of various schemes encourages various groups, particularly lone parents back into work, providing help and incentives to find work.

Although unemployment has fallen in the UK in recent years, child poverty rates increased due to the distribution of employment amongst different types of family. In 1998/1999, one in three children lived in families where no one was in work. This number had doubled since 1979 and is higher than any industrialised country except Ireland. This is attributable to inequality of earnings.

Opportunity for All said that different family types face different risks of falling into poverty:

- 63 per cent of lone parent families live in poverty.
- Couples with children account for the largest number of people in poverty (4.7 million).
- 36 per cent of children live in a family where no one is in full time work.

Analysis of Government measures to tackle poverty have found that measures announced in budgets since May 1997 will reduce the number of children in poverty by 800,000 by 2002. As many as 89 per cent of children in the UK will benefit. The poverty expert David Piachaud concludes that "this represents a most significant step on the Prime Minister's 20-year mission to end child poverty".

But more needs to be done. To achieve the goal for 2020 requires acceleration in the future. If the current rate of progress were maintained, a very big 'if', only two-thirds of child poverty would be abolished in 20 years. Without radical changes in taxation, current policies would only reduce poverty to 1979 levels.

Providing jobs for all those able to work will only reduce child poverty by half. More specific measures are needed, such as a minimum income standard for all families with children, whether they are in work or not. Some people cannot work and more should be done to raise their benefit levels.

Tim Marsh is with the Child Poverty Action Group. For more information refer to *Setting a Governmental Minimum Income Standard: the next steps*, J. Veit Wilson, "Poverty" 105, (2000), London.

Photo: Peter Fryer / Save the Children

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The move to achieve economic and monetary union within the European Union is a huge experiment. Bill Bell considers what it means for children.

For the new currency to be managed properly, policy instruments such as the money supply and the setting of interest rates, will have to be centralised for all EU countries who join the scheme. The exchange rate of the new currency on the international money markets will also be part of this brief-which will be handled by the new, independent, European Central Bank (ECB) whose foremost task will be to keep prices stable and inflation low.

Economic and monetary union (EMU) remains for the moment a barely tested concept so any assessment of its impact on children can only be speculation. However, it is possible by looking EMU's strengths and weaknesses to start the process.

EMU's fans trumpet its contribution to macroeconomic growth, stability and employment, benefits achieved by removing fluctuations in exchange rates between countries trading within the EU. Then as a single capital market develops, investments will be moved more easily as currency risks are no longer a concern.

The savings that should result will also boost overall economic activity and the common currency pricing across Europe will have a direct impact on competition.

Indirect benefits of monetary union are also likely to exist. It is argued that the Euro will help deliver low, stable inflation. This will lead to a sustained increase in economic activity, because previously high inflation economies can enjoy the benefits of long term low inflation rates.

The dividends from economic growth will filter through to investors and workers in the form of higher returns, wage and salary increases, new jobs, improved public services and welfare benefits. Furthermore the competitive pressures will help drive down the cost of raising children, aided by lower inflation rate.

But there are some clouds. There are definite risks associated with monetary union, and like some of the benefits, they are indirect and likely to filter down to children via factors associated with growth, stability, and employment.

The first risk is one associated with deflation, where the push for price stability becomes detrimental to job creation and economic adjustment. Indeed families with dependent children might gain from moderate inflation and an emphasis on employment creation in economic policy-making.

Problems may also arise if the convergence of national economies goes less smoothly than hoped, with monetary union favouring some member states more than others. Other risks relate to the difficulties in managing the mix of fiscal and monetary policies at European Union and member state levels. Monetary union takes away a government's control of its monetary policy, a useful shock absorber when faced with a changing situation. This leaves only fiscal policy as a way of stabilising demand and redistributing income.

However, when, in December 1996 member states agreed to set a three per cent limit of GDP on the size of their budget deficits, they also restricted elements of fiscal policy. These limits might prevent a smooth, rapid adjustment to economic fluctuations thus increasing costs of such adjustments in the form of higher unemployment or cuts in public spending. Children are particularly vulnerable to all these outcomes.

If monetary union succeeds in promoting low inflation and interest rates and steady economic growth, children's quality of life will improve. But certain signals indicate that the process of unification may produce mild to severe destabilising effects. Unless the economic management of the fiscal-monetary policy framework is successful, periodic economic shocks will occur in particular countries and social sectors. For families and children that will mean living in a world of greater instability haunted by threats of unemployment and public service cuts.

Bill Bell is head of advocacy at Save the Children UK and a member of the management team of the Child Rights Information Network. This article is a summary of *Children, Economics and the EU – towards Child Friendly Policies*, (2000), London: Save the Children.

Photo: Dave Modden / Save the Children

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Photo: Lesley Doyle / Save the Children

Photo: Penny Tweedie / Save the Children

European Union trade agreements and children

Most European Union trade policy is blind to the effects on children, but trade agreements can have several kinds of impact. The most direct is on working children. A trade agreement may direct a country's economy towards, or away from, the production of goods that exploit child labour. Trade policies may also have indirect effects on poverty levels by affecting government revenues and the amount spent on schools, health and education. Additionally, trade policies can artificially keep goods out of the market, thereby affecting employment and parents' access to employment.

The Cotonou Agreement signed on 23 June contains various references to child rights. This agreement, which replaces the Lomé Convention is an aid and trade agreement between the European Union and 71 former colonies of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The Cotonou Agreement focuses on poverty reduction as its principal objective, which is to be achieved through political dialogue, development aid and closer economic and trade cooperation.

Whereas children appeared only once in the Lomé Convention in Article 244, the Cotonou Agreement addresses various cooperation strategies that will improve basic social service, take account of local needs and the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. This includes improving education and training, improving health systems and nutrition, and promoting the fight against HIV/AIDS.

But the most significant progress is contained in Article 26 of the agreement, which states that "cooperation shall also support the establishment of a coherent and comprehensive policy for realising the potential of youth so that they are better integrated into society to achieve their full potential." This includes policies, measures and operations aimed at: (a) protecting the rights of children and youth, especially those of girl children; (b) promoting the skills, energy, innovation and potential of youth in order to enhance their economic, social and cultural opportunities and enlarge their employment opportunities in the productive sector; (c) helping community-based institutions to give children the opportunity to develop their physical, psychological, social and economic potential; and (d) reintegrating into society children in post-conflict situations through rehabilitation programmes.

Furthermore, Article 50 of the agreement also reaffirms a commitment to international labour standards defined by the ILO including the elimination of worst forms of child labour.

All trade agreements should contain references to children and child impact analyses must be undertaken before all trade agreements are struck.

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Globalisation makes the books look good at poor children's expense. We should change the trade rules, say Rita Bhatia and Caroline Harper.

It's the same story whether you take the findings of academics or the testimonies of those working in organisations like Save the Children. The influence of globalisation on the lives of poor children and their families has been varied and profound.

Reduced welfare expenditure, increased income inequality between and within countries, as well as social fragmentation and poverty can all in some measure be traced back to this. Trade liberalisation, for example, affects child welfare with factors such as the distribution of economic activity in a society and the effects of employment on income.

Globalisation, as articulated through trade or financial liberalisation, is a policy choice. However, economic globalisation is now prescribed to countries in order "to liberalise national and global markets in the belief that free flows of trade, finance and information will produce the best outcome for growth and human welfare" (UNDP Human Development Report, 1997). This prescription is cause for great concern as it applies to developing countries irrespective of local circumstance, including unfair trade terms, crippling debt burdens, and insufficient participation in determining economic paths.

Children will be increasingly affected as the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) expand into more areas of domestic policy. Young people will feel the loss of government revenue as trade tariffs are reduced because social service budgets will be axed to compensate for the shortfall.

There are two essential questions that need to be asked and answered. What kind of global trade rules should we have and how should global trade rules be balanced so they do not adversely affect social, health and education provisions in poor countries?

The example of trade creep into health, which is related to trade agreements such as TRIPs and GATs, raises important questions about the cost, provision and sustainability of health care both in the North and South. Any re-launching of a new round of trade talks has to consider how trade interacts with human development.

Lundberg and Squire at the World Bank recognise that trade liberalisation and greater openness benefits the majority, but harms the poorest. In *The Simultaneous Evolution of Growth and Inequality* (1999), they state that the poor are vulnerable to international price shifts and "this vulnerability is magnified by the country's openness to trade".

Economic arguments have attempted to show that increased trade contributes to increased income for the household, and that this reduces poverty. Thus it is argued that increased trade improves child welfare because there is an increased demand for labour so wages increase and prices change favourably. This is backed up by the fact that in the past 50 years, average per capita income has more than tripled as global GDP increased nine-fold from $3 trillion to $30 trillion (UNDP 1999).

However, global poverty is more complex than that. Money-metric statistics and income indicators based on the household alone can not identify the range of problems that comprise poverty. It is now more commonplace to observe that poverty and well-being must include social assets such as security, independence and self-respect.

Many arguments for economic globalisation and discussions on growth and inequality fail to address the implications of inadequate poverty measures. These obscure the social costs of struggling to maintain income levels, and these social costs can sometimes be huge as families make sacrifices to maintain essential income. These costs include removing children from school, reducing their nutritional intake, allowing or requiring them to labour inside and outside the home, reduced time to nurture and so on. As a result we sometimes see cases where child poverty increases as incomes increase.

A focus on income and consumption measures in order to alleviate poverty naturally promotes income as a solution. It does not recognise the costs of maintaining income levels during times of financial crisis and the effect of poverty on child nutrition, child work and women's time.

Major targets and policy papers such as the internationally agreed target to halve the numbers who live in extreme poverty by 2015 and the World Bank report *Growth is good for the Poor* fail to account for these social costs.

Just as the concept of globalisation has forced us towards an understanding of global interconnectedness and multiple complex relationships, so should we develop a more complex understanding of global poverty.

Rita Bhatia is a policy analyst for Save the Children UK. Caroline Harper is the head of research at Save the Children UK.

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Photo: Dave Walker / Save the Children

Photo: Roger Lemoyne / UNICEF

Girls and macroeconomics

Girls who are working constitute more than half of the 250 million children (from five to 14 years old) who are working. Nine out of 10 child domestics are girls, some as young as five years.

Girls who do not attend school account for more than half of the 130 million children currently not in class. It is estimated that 73 million girls are not receiving a school education. Three in 10 girls do not attend school compared to only one in 10 boys.

Most studies show that girls begin working at home at a younger age than their brothers, and that girls work on average seven hours more than boys. The vast majority of girls work at home work between four and 16 hours a day at home. Their work is invisible, isolated, unpaid and unrecognised.

NGOs working in rural areas have found that up to 75 per cent of agricultural work is undertaken by women and girls.

About 500,000 girls are engaged as sex workers in India. Around 4,500 girls from Nepal are trafficked to India each year and a similar number from Bangladesh are trafficked to Pakistan.

An estimated two million children around the world will be abused by adults through prostitution, trafficking and pornography. The majority of them will be girls.

Sources: Global March against Child Labour, UNICEF, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Asia of South Asian Children and Women

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Zafiris Tzannatos shares his personal views and explains that the problem of child labour is so complex only combined forces can tackle it.

Child labour is one of the most devastating consequences of persistent poverty.

Premature and extensive engagement in work prevents children from accumulating human capital and having higher earnings and higher welfare in later life. In many instances engaging child labour is the result of market failures and a coping mechanism for families when households cannot afford education for their children and cannot borrow for this purpose. Efforts to eliminate harmful child labour make good development and good economic sense.

It is generally agreed that child labour is the result of widespread poverty, which can be reduced and eliminated over time through high and persistent economic growth. However, the reverse is also true: child labour can be a significant *cause* of poverty if children are hurt by it. Children can be hurt *directly* or indirectly by child labour. They are hurt directly if they are hurt physically, emotionally, or socially; they can be hurt *indirectly* through lack of opportunity to education, which deprives children of their chance to be productive adults. Many children, for example, work under harsh conditions that preclude schooling altogether and are harmful to their physical and mental well-being and their social development.

Given the complex nature of child labour, solutions are needed to reach beyond conventional thinking and practices. Research has shown that in many countries, the incidence of child labour declines (as does the proportion of children in the total labour force), when (1) there are increases in the per capita GDP and/or (2) when there is increased availability of, and access to, education.

These findings are in line with the main approaches developed to combat child labour. These include the reduction of poverty, creation of opportunities to high quality basic education and reduction of the costs of education, provision of support services for working children, public awareness, legislation and regulation of child labour, and the elimination of the most harmful forms of child labour through the promotion of international measures. Of course these approaches are not mutually exclusive and should be adopted in various combinations in child labour reduction strategies.

The World Bank approach to helping to eliminate the worst forms of child labour recognises the leading role of our partners especially the United Nations Children's Fund (with the emphasis on children) and the International Labour Organisation (with the emphasis on labour). Along with them, other partners, governments, civil society and communities, the World Bank helps to make access to quality education as widespread as possible. It supports the poor in their efforts to increase their incomes, to afford their children's education, and to afford the opportunity cost of not working.

Child labour cannot be solved by any single effort or by any single organisation. The responsibility for reducing child labour falls on all of us.

Zafiris Tzannatos is leader at the World Bank Global Child Labour Program. For more information, refer to Peter Fallon and Zafiris Tzannatos *Child Labor: Issues and Directions for the World Bank*. World Bank, 1997.

Photo: Dana Minden / Save the Children

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Time to slow down financial globalisation

Children paid a heavy price for the drive for growth in Asia, reports Jenina Joy Chavez-Malaluan.

There was a time not so long ago when the liberalisation of the financial system was praised as the pillar of Asian growth. But integration into global finance exposed the continent to much vulnerability and deepened some of its weaknesses. The 1997 crisis Asia hit children, the silent victims of the crisis, hard.

Throughout the 1980s Asian growth was driven by competition for limited public resources and export markets, and, through privatisation, liberalised trading regimes were promoted. A decade later, finance capital became the crucial factor of the economy. Between 1990 and 1995, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines (as a group) posted an average GDP growth rate that was twice as high as the world average GDP growth rate. Accumulated capital in the developed world took advantage of substantial short-term price differentials.

Growth enabled these countries to drastically reduce poverty and improve certain income and social indicators. Suspicions about sustainability were swept aside. But the gaping current account deficits and non-performing loans that were mounting sent investors running. The result was a reversal in private capital flows, especially short-term ones. In 1997 the crisis countries of Asia experienced a 78 per cent drop in net private flows.

The reversal in private capital flows and steep currency devaluation produced huge losses that were accompanied by increased lending rates and decreases in consumption and investments. Governments were compelled to cut back on services. Households were forced to make painful adjustments. Impacts of the crisis in the Philippines were deepest in 1998. It exposed the government's weaknesses and inadequate response which it made indiscriminate budgetary cuts.

The interest rate hike caused business initiatives to stall, production to slow and unemployment to rocket. Since it is typical for Filipino families to remit part of their income to their extended family, those families relying on remittances from the capital Manila also experienced income loss.

Adjustments in household expenditures were made mostly on what households considered as 'non-essentials' like clothing, transportation, and even medical expenses. Basics like food were generally protected even as food budgets were cut. This meant use of lower quality foods and food substitutes. For households with pre-school children the cutback in expenditures was more alarming because of the type of items that were cut. More than one in four households with pre-school children reported having discontinued purchases of infant formula, while as many discontinued visits to health facilities or purchase of vitamin supplements in 1998.

The crisis had a strong impact on family relations and household stress that manifested itself in strained marital and parent-child relations. Drastic declines in incomes translated into less incentive for children to study, and more stress on female household members. There was significant correlation between reductions in child-specific expenditures (such as school allowance and spending on school-related activities) and reductions in children's interest in studies and their overall physical well being.

Some of the older children had to take on compensated and uncompensated work as a direct response to the crisis, when the mother had to attend to informal economic activities.

Vulnerabilities brought about by this type of economic situation create challenges for governments. Better internal regulatory mechanisms are needed, particularly for financial institutions, corporate indebtedness and short-term capital. Most importantly, there is great need to institutionalise appropriate safety nets regimes to protect the vulnerable.

When children are the victims of a crisis, this is not just because of what is done to them but also because of what is *not* being done for them. Economic growth is good, but broad-based low growth rather than very high growth will always be preferable.

Jenina Joy Chavez-Malaluan is with Focus on the Global South in the Philippines.

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The figures may add up on paper, but El Salvador's narrowly focussed economic policies spell doom for the majority of its young, says Raúl Moreno.

Ten years ago El Salvador ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and also embarked on a structural adjustment programme (SAP).

The progress made in growth and stabilisation remains questionable, as are the SAP's effects on society's most vulnerable sectors. Although El Salvador's poverty has structural roots, there is compelling evidence that the programme has deepened the inequity and social inequality in the country.

The unequal distribution of income and assets within El Salvador's economy has had a direct impact on the development of many children. Structural adjustment simply added to that. Half of El Salvador's homes are poor, and 234,000 households cannot cover their basic food needs.

Most of the country's families experienced no improvement during the last decade. The emphasis was placed on beating inflation, rather than job creation and revitalising the economy. The result is a weakened social fabric with an unprecedented level of crime, increasing drug abuse and violence.

Monetary policy has kept up the real interest rate, affecting most economic sectors, especially housing, and there is an acute and growing lack where homes for the poor are concerned. Agriculture has faced a decade of negative policies, despite the long-standing importance of the sector in generating added value, jobs and foreign currency. Lack of investment has led to an ailing health system, further diminishing the chances of poor families to improve their living standards.

The numbers of people with regular access to social services remains very limited. If the privatisation of health services and water distribution goes ahead, it will strike another blow against the poor for whom access will become even more uncertain.

Fiscal stability is positive, but with low tax revenue, low and inefficient public spending and the regressive tax system, the system does not favour poor families, especially children and adolescents who are more dependent on public resources than adults. In contradiction of Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and adolescents do not figure as a priority in public resources allocations, nor are their needs reflected in state budgets or macro-economic policy design.

One of the pillars of the economic policy reform package is making the labour market flexible. This has produced a marked increase in precarious and fragmented employment, while the informal economy has expanded. To survive such uncertainty parents have resorted to sending their children to work.

The structural adjustment programmes have overlooked the consequences of imbalance in the labour market. Rising labour costs are dealt with by containing the minimum wage, set according to the cost of the basic food basket. This however does not cover the minimum calorie requirement to guarantee household survival.

It has been acknowledged that the same sectors of the population who have bourne the cost of economic policies have weathered the main impact of the structural adjustment ones. However beyond this acknowledgement no progress has been made save the view that social investment funds be used for charity and assistance. No comprehensive and systematic policy to deal with the major social problems exists.

The SAP's have merely involved social policy geared to specific aspects such as attention to vulnerable groups, the provision of basic services and the reduction of poverty. Social policies cannot continue to be used as instruments to offset the effects of adjustment. The best social policy is a good economic policy, and the Convention's belief in "the best interest of the child" is also the best interest of the country's future.

Until these factors are addressed, children will be forced to engage in a struggle for survival along with other members their families. With little hope of a change in their situation, the outlook is bleak indeed.

Raúl Moreno is director of macroeconomics and development at the El Salvador National Development Foundation (FUNDE) and chair of the School of Economics at El Salvador University. This article is a summary of a research study conducted by José Ángel Tolentino, María Alicia Ordóñez, Stefan de Wylder and Raúl Moreno.

Photo: Julio Etchart / Save the Children

Photo: Julio Etchart / Save the Children

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A clear case for relief

The debt relief process is bogged down in red tape, but there is a way of freeing governments and ensuring the benefits go to those who need it most now. Tony Burdon explains.

"What more qualification is there for debt relief when children are dying? Must we ignore the howling of our children to pay debt?" Julius Nyerere, Butiama, April 1998.

Last year the G7 promised $100 billion in debt relief and promised 25 countries that relief would start this year, but despite these promises progress has been appallingly slow. By August only nine out of 36 countries, which are eligible for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, had started to receive a trickle of relief. In the meantime government revenue in these indebted countries has been diverted from essential investments in health and education to repayments to foreign creditors, and excessive debt stocks have deterred investors.

Photo: Cindy Andrews / UNICEF

And so, in spite of the fanfare, the debt crisis continues unabated as it has done for two decades, undermining poverty reduction and human development, and making international development goals unattainable for many countries. For example, Tanzania entered the HIPC framework early this year but will continue to pay twice as much on debt as on primary education, thereby leaving two million children in Tanzania out of school.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child commits states to a range of obligations to child health, education, and the survival and development of the child. Under Article 4 of the Convention, states agreed to "...undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources, and where needed, within the framework of international co-operation." While some progress has been made, the majority of creditor governments and their institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have failed to meet their obligations.

About half of the debt owed by 52 of the poorest countries, which are in urgent need of debt cancellation, is owed directly to individual governments-mainly in the G7, namely Japan, the US, Britain, Canada, France, Germany and Italy. Most of the rest is multilateral debt, owed to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, organisations effectively run by the G7 governments.

Children bear the highest cost of the debt tragedy for they are most vulnerable to the effects of debilitated health services in indebted countries. In the education sector, lack of investment consigns children, particularly girls, to lives trapped by poverty.

HIPC countries suffer some of the worst levels of deprivation in the developing world. Here about 3.4 million children (almost 20 per cent) will die before they turn five. Life expectancy is 51 years, which is 26 years less than life expectancy in the industrialised countries. Around 47 million children are not in school, and these numbers are growing, rather than declining. Based on current trends, by 2015 HIPC countries will not meet the international development goal to reduce child mortality by two thirds. In fact the gap between trend and target represents two million *additional* child deaths.

The picture is similarly bleak in education. Oxfam estimates that, based on current trends, by 2015 over 75 million children will remain out of school; and the majority of these children will be in HIPC countries.

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The new debt relief framework, HIPC2, agreed to in June 1999, links debt relief to the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. These try to involve civil society in the process of debt cancellation. At the same time, agreements reached by the IMF and World Bank have re-defined their roles in HIPC countries. In future their programmes are supposed to support nationally developed strategies, placing poverty reduction at the centre of IMF and World Bank programming. However, the debt relief process has now become bogged down in bureaucratic processes and strapped by wide-ranging conditions, furthermore there has been little change in IMF and World Bank practice. Debt relief for Honduras, for instance, was delayed due to negotiations over electricity privatisation. HIPC is not delivering on its promise to provide deeper and faster debt relief.

That is why Oxfam has proposed that HIPC and other countries that are poor and indebted, such as Nigeria and Haiti, should enter HIPC immediately if they meet one critical condition: that is they commit to placing debt relief finance into a transparently-managed Poverty Fund. Interim poverty reduction strategies must direct expenditure towards areas that reduce poverty, such as education, health, rural roads, and employment generation programmes. While these countries must take the initiative to undertake long-term reforms to seriously reduce poverty, it must be recognised that these countries face major poverty reduction challenges, which shouldn't have to wait for debt relief. This is a mechanism that could provide relief now.

Tony Burdon is policy adviser at Oxfam.

Photo: Barry Trestle / Save the Children

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The debt we owe our children

A brighter future for them depends on basic social services and debt relief, says Jan Vandemoortele.

At the World Summit for Children in 1990, the promise was made that all children would be enrolled in primary school by the year 2000. Today however, it is estimated that more than 110 million remain out of school. And so it is a sorry distinction of today's world that at the dawn of the Information Age about one in three children fails to complete five years of education-the minimum for basic literacy.

Moreover, key social indicators suggest the pace of progress slowed down in the past decade when compared to the 1970s and 1980s. Progress continued during the 1990s but has not kept pace with promises made. The average under-five mortality rate in developing countries was to be reduced by 50 per cent by 2000, but preliminary data show that the average rate declined by a mere five per cent over the 1990s. Child malnutrition was to be halved between 1990 and 2000, but preliminary estimates indicate a reduction by only one-sixth.

Why have the promises not been fulfilled? Why are two out of every five children in developing countries living in poverty and struggling to survive on less than $1 per day when the global economy is experiencing unprecedented prosperity?

The simple answer is because virtually all countries under-invest in children. Governments in developing countries spend less than 15 per cent of their national budgets on basic social services. Rich countries spend about 10 per cent of their aid budgets on basic education and basic health combined. This is much less than what is needed. The 20/20 initiative called on poor countries to allocate 20 per cent of their national budgets to basic social services, and called on rich countries to direct 20 per cent of their aid budget to the same services. Today, spending on basic social services by both poor and rich countries is falling short (by about $100 billion per year) of what is needed to achieve the 20/20 shares. This only represents about one third of one per cent of global annual income and means that if the world were to invest an extra 30 cents out of every $100, all children could be healthy, well-nourished and in primary school.

If achieving the goals of the 20/20 initiative and delivering basic social services takes so little money, then why has it not happened? The answer to this is more complex. Developing countries under-invest in basic social services because of the debt burden. About two-thirds of developing countries spend more on debt servicing than on basic social services; and some countries spend three to five times more on debt. Often debt servicing absorbs between one-third and one-half of the national budget. This makes the objective of macro-economic stability hard to achieve, if not impossible.

To spend more on external debt than on basic social services, when tens of millions of children lack access to basic education, primary health, adequate food and safe drinking water, is not only morally wrong, it is also poor economics.

There are attempts to cancel the debt of poor countries, but progress is too slow. The Jubilee 2000 campaigners basically have it right: debt is a millstone around the neck of the poorest countries that has to be removed. The time for debt relief is not today, it was yesterday. For millions of children, tomorrow will be too late. We must support the Jubilee 2000 campaign of non-governmental organisations that call for the immediate cancellation and forgiveness of debt of the poorest countries, and seek to ensure that the money is spent on genuine poverty reduction and also redirected to basic social services.

The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which is sponsored by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, remains the best hope for solving the debt crisis. Yet its implementation has been painfully slow with only Bolivia, Guyana, Mozambique and Uganda receiving debt relief in the first three years of operations. Under the enhanced HIPC initiative launched in 1999, participating countries will be expected to give priority to poverty reduction. But again there are issues with this enhanced initiative as developing countries have been asked to invest time and efforts in processes and documents that may not result in tangible benefits. Preparing a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper absorbs scarce capacities and resources. Such documentary requirements can easily postpone practical solutions to the debt problem and could result in unacceptably high opportunity costs for the poor.

Spending on health and education often by-passes the poor. This happens when the advantages of public spending are incorrectly targeted and end up going to those who are better-off rather than to those who are poor and need it most.

The most effective and cost-efficient way to reduce poverty is to ensure universal access to basic social services. These services can make an enormous difference beyond their own sphere of operation. Debt relief is also a key part of the solution, albeit that by itself it will not be sufficient to eradicate human poverty.

Some commentators suggest that there are many reasons for delaying debt relief but we have only to look at the example of Nelson Mandela for inspiration to the contrary. When he was freed from prison, he realised that he had to look to the future and forgive the past in order to move South Africa forward and overcome the legacy of apartheid. Unfortunately at present the international community is unwilling to do likewise and remove the yoke that shackles poor countries by relieving the legacy of bad loans.

Jan Vandemoortele is chief policy analyst at UNICEF in New York

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Children and poverty

The causes of poverty include conflict, natural disasters, population growth, poor governance, limited employment opportunities or access to land, failed economic strategies and social inequality brought about by disability, ethnicity or age. Children are as much, if not more, affected than adults. How we understand both the nature and causes of poverty is fundamental to our ability to find solutions.

Here are some key indicators on children and poverty

• In many of the world's poorest counties, children under the age of 15 make up over 40 per cent of the population. The highest proportions are Palestine (52 per cent), Uganda (50 per cent), Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, Somalia and Yemen (each at 48 per cent), and Burundi (47 per cent). The UK is 19 per cent, the US 21 per cent, Italy 14 per cent. [Source: UN Statistics Division, 1998]

• The situation of UK children has steadily deteriorated. In 1997/98 one in three children (about 4.4 million) lived in households with below half the average income, compared with one in 10 in 1989. [Source: Child Poverty Action Group, 2000]

• The International Labour Organisation estimates 120 million children between the ages of five and 14 years work full time, and a further 130 million part time. [Source: "Statistics on working children and hazardous child labour brief", ILO, 1998]

• The under-five child mortality rate in sub-Saharan Africa is 173 deaths per 1000 live births. In industrialised countries the rate is 6 deaths per 1000 live births. [Source: "State of the World's Children", UNICEF, 2000]

• In developing countries more than 130 million children out of a total of 625 million of primary school age are growing-up without access to basic education. [Source: "State of the World's Children", UNICEF, 1999]

Poverty indicators

Low income is still the most common way of measuring poverty. Almost every country sets its own poverty line, usually with reference to international lines and measurement conventions. Income poverty is measured in two ways-as absolute or relative poverty. Relative poverty is measured as households living on or below half of the national average disposable income. International absolute poverty lines are set, for people living in the South as less than US$1 or US$2 per day. For middle income countries it is less than US$4 per day.

Photo: Caroly Andrews / UNICEF

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International aid - what's in it for children?

Would young people fair better if development projects were tested at the outset to see exactly what their impact is on children? Sheridan Bartlett thinks so.

For the past decade, the international community has pledged itself to helping the world's poor children.

The broad acceptance that children have rights and the fact that children's well-being is a telling indicator of social health have been in large part responsible for this stand. But donor funding priorities and strategies suggest that grand declarations of this kind are often more rhetoric than a commitment to focused action.

But let's look at the aid situation and the chances of the international community delivering what it has promised. How much of aid goes to the basic needs that are fundamental in securing children's rights? And are children's priorities really taken into account in the support given to these basic needs?

Photo: Dario Mitidieri / Save the Children

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Over the last decade there has been a dramatic decline in official assistance to low income countries. Loans and grants from multilateral agencies rose over this period, but were more than offset by the decline in bilateral assistance. Between 1990 and 1997, as GNP grew by almost $8,000 per person in donor countries, aid dropped by $18 per person, and overall assistance to low income countries fell from US$32 billion to US $25 billion.

Since 1997 the rate of this decline has eased off. However increases in aid are largely related to rescue packages in response to the Asian financial crisis, often at the expense of routine programmes for poverty reduction.

Overall bilateral assistance remains at about 33 per cent of the amount supposedly targeted by donor countries, in 1998 it reached not quite one quarter of per cent of GNP, a pitiful fraction of the amount spent each year on defence. In spite of general prosperity, disparities and poverty increase, with children affected disproportionately compared to other age groups.

Basic human needs have never been a high priority for development assistance. Support for the interventions essential to children's survival and development such as improved housing, water and sanitation, nutrition, primary health care and basic education represent a small percentage of overall aid.

There is increasing recognition that economic growth alone cannot eradicate poverty, and recently there has been greater commitment in the development assistance world to targeting poverty more directly. The 20/20 initiative, proposed at the 1995 Social Summit, sets as a goal that 20 per cent of both donor assistance and developing country budgets be allocated to basic needs. Similarly the S21C (Shaping the 21st Century) strategy proposes a number of poverty eradication targets for the year 2015.

But changing understandings and commitments have not resulted in altered allocations across the board. Some multilateral agencies, notably the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank, have shifted priorities towards basic needs and away from more conventional economic infrastructure projects. But among donor countries the funds committed to basic social services remain limited.

Figures for 1998, reported by the Reality of Aid Project, show 6.6 per cent of combined bilateral development assistance funds going to water supply and sanitation. From the 17 countries that reported these figures, only 1.44 per cent and 1.72 per cent were earmarked for basic education and primary health respectively. Only three countries' aid programmes were reported to have met their fair share of the targeted aid to basic needs in 1997.

The situation is further complicated by the overwhelming debt repayment schedules many countries face. These burdens continue to undermine the states' capacity to fund basic services, while projected debt relief plans proceed at a snail's pace.

Even when aid is allocated to the areas that most profoundly affect children, there is no guarantee that projects will actually reflect the priorities of children and those who care for them. Attention to the needs of a community at large does not always trickle down so that children benefit, anymore than economic prosperity automatically improves the situation of the poor.

Standards for adequate water provision, for instance, often fail to take into account the sheer volume of water needed within a household to ensure the health of young children, or the burden of hauling that water from a distant standpipe. Sanitation solutions rarely reflect the difficulty for very young children of waiting in line, or their fear of overly large pit openings. Projects to upgrade existing community space seldom pay attention to child safety. Schools are often built without an understanding of local resistance to girls going any distance from home. Attention to basic needs is not enough if it fails to recognise the realities of half the population.

Gender-aware development has called for women's concerns to be considered in every aspect of decision-making. Simply tacking on extra programmes for women is not enough. If international commitments to children are to be more than empty promises, the same principles must apply in their case. Not only should greater weight be given to interventions that benefit children, but every stage of policy, planning and programming must be based on a realistic understanding of how poor children and their carers live their lives and what day-to-day difficulties they encounter. That means listening to what they have to say and taking on board their opinions. Only then will the commitments from the international community truly bear fruit.

Sheridan Bartlett is research associate with the Children's Environments Research Group, City University in New York.

Photo: Eli Reed / Magnum Photos

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When children are the losers

Macroeconomic reforms can have a devastating impact on children's lives. Here Pham Thi Lan examines what young people in Vietnam are up against since the government adopted such policies.

The major macroeconomic reforms that Vietnam undertook from 1989 onwards have dramatically altered the prospects of children.

On the external front, the government liberalised trade laws and harmonised exchange rates and legal reforms in a bid to attract foreign investment. Domestically it also introduced sweeping reforms. It dismantled price restrictions on goods and services, freed the banking system from much of its bureaucratic red tape, implemented positive interest rates, cut back surpluses in state-owned enterprises, reduced state subsidies and the state budget deficit.

The result was rapid economic growth, as GDP increased 5.1 per cent in 1990 and 8.1 per cent in 1997. But these are just the figures. The reality is that growth has been extremely unbalanced. It has been capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive and urban expansion has won over rural development.

Such radical changes have had four major consequences for children.

The economic reforms have, in the main, not considered access to basic services, despite the crucial role these play in creating a successful and equitable transition to a market economy. Numerous analyses indicate that budget spending has been greater on higher education, a move that tends to benefit the better off. More funds have also been devoted to hospitals and not commune health centres-preferred by the poor because they are easier to get to. Consequently, children from poor households are unlikely to benefit from the basic social services.

Market liberalisation has led to an increase in child labour. As children have more chance to earn money, so greater numbers of them are dropping out of school or even failing to enrol in the first place in rural areas. And wherever they are, children who labour are exposed to greater risks of abuse and exploitation.

Social sector reforms have removed traditional safety nets and introduced user fees for basis social services increasing the financial burden on poor households. High hospital charges have created an additional obstacle for children from poor families receiving proper treatment. Ethnic minority areas, where poverty is greater than the national average, are particularly affected.

Privatisation policies have lead to the closure of most pre-schools run by cooperatives, with older children now devoting more time to looking after their siblings. Further knock-on effects have meant standards in childcare are dropping and child malnutrition increasing.

Pham Thi Lan is senior project officer, children and economics with Save the Children UK's Vietnam Programme

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CRIN Membership form

CHILD RIGHTS INFORMATION NETWORK

Please photocopy and return to CRIN

Name of organisation

Acronym/abbreviation | Year established

English translation of name of organisation

Name of director

Name of main CRIN contact in your organisation

Postal address (include country)

Tel (include country codes) | Fax (include country codes)

Email | Website

Number of staff

Languages used

Does your organisation have capacity to receive email regularly?

Does your organisation have capacity to visit websites regularly?

Number of CRIN Newsletters required in English, French and/or Spanish

Please give a short description of your organisation's aims and activities (please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

List countries in which your organisation works (please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

Please tick the appropriate box

How do you describe your organisation?

- ☐ Non governmental organisation (NGO)
- ☐ United Nations agency
- ☐ Community based organisation
- ☐ Research institute
- ☐ International organisation
- ☐ Governmental organisation

Does your organisation?

- ☐ Work directly with children
- ☐ Lobby governments and the United Nations
- ☐ Work in partnership with other organisations
- ☐ Provide training on children's rights
- ☐ Provide funding to other organisations
- ☐ Undertake research on children's rights
- ☐ Work with the media and press
- ☐ Undertake legal casework on behalf of children

Which age group does your organisation target?

☐ Children 0-4 ☐ Children 5-15 ☐ Children 16-18

Does your organisation have expertise in any of the following themes?

- ☐ Children in care, fostering and adoption
- ☐ Children living with HIV/AIDS
- ☐ Child labour and working children
- ☐ Individual cases of violations
- ☐ Children in armed conflict
- ☐ Children in conflict with the law
- ☐ Reporting and monitoring on the CRC
- ☐ Children and the media
- ☐ Children with disabilities
- ☐ Participation of children in decision making
- ☐ Children and education
- ☐ Refugee and unaccompanied children
- ☐ Environment and habitat
- ☐ Sexual exploitation of children
- ☐ Children and health
- ☐ Children working and living on the street

Signature | Date

Please return this completed form along with any relevant publications, newsletters, annual reports and brochures to:

Child Rights Information Network, c/o Save the Children, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, UK

Tel +44.(0)20.7716.2400 Fax +44.(0)20.7793.7628 Email info@crin.org

Joining CRIN is free. CRIN's membership policy requires that you (1) work for an organisation that supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (2) are involved in child rights activities, (3) are committed to sharing information. CRIN is an open network of members and therefore holds no official status beyond that of its member organisations. CRIN is unable to accredit any member organisation or provide funding for its members,unless funding is directly related to one of CRIN's projects approved by CRIN's management team.

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Calendar of events

November 2 to 3, 2000
Spend, Spend, Spend? Children, Young People and Money
Hilton Dunblane Hydro, Scotland
Leanne Mabberley, Children in Scotland, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, EH2 4RG.
T +44.(0)131.222.2410
E lmabberley@childreninscotland.org.uk

November 2 to 4, 2000
International Conference on the Humanization of Childbirth
Fortaleza - Ceará, Brazil
Eventuall Promoções & Assessoria, Rua Dr. Gilberto Studart, 369 - Papicu - 60190-750, Fortaleza-CE-Brazil
T +55.85.265.4022 F+55.85.265.4009
E childbirth@eventuall.com.br
http://www.humanization.org

November 10 to 11, 2000
Children, Social Exclusion and Citizenship: Policy and Practice for Children who are Socially Excluded in Denmark and the UK
Sue Cottam, University of Sunderland, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Priestman Building, Green Terrace, Sunderland, SR1 3PZ, UK
T +44.191.515.3621 F +44.191.515.2229
E susan.cottam@sunderland.ac.uk

November 14 to 17, 2000
Future Perspectives of Young Women and Girls who Live on the Streets
Berlin, Germany
Dr Dolly Conto Obregon, Director, Internationales Strassenkinder Archiv, Weinbergsweg 23, 10119 Berlin, Germany
T +49.30.44.02.46.56
E conto@strassekinder-archive.de

November 19, 2000
World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse
Elly Pradervand - Founding Director, Women's World Summit Foundation / Fondation Sommet Mondial des Femmes, P.O. Box 2001, 1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland
T +41.22.738.6619 F +41.22.738.8248
E wwsf@iprolink.ch
http:/www.woman.ch

November 27 to 29, 2000
Children at the Dawn of a New Millenium
Nicosia, Cyprus
Maisoun JABALI, Directorate General III, Social Cohesion, Programme for Children, Council of Europe, F-67076 Strasbourg Cedex, France
T +33.3.90.21.47.98 F +33.3.88.41.37.65
E maisoun.jabali@coe.int
http://www.coe.int

November 30 to December 2, 2000
Youth Care - Youth Punishment
Luxembourg
Internationale Gesellschaft fuer erzieherische Hilfen (FICE-Germany), Schaumainkai 101-103, D-60596, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
T +49.69.63398611 F +49.69.63398625
E tagungen@igfh.de

December 5 to 6, 2000
Conference 2000: Findings on Reproductive Health of Refugees and Displaced Populations
Washington D.C., USA
Sara Casey, E sec42@columbia.edu
http://www.rhrc.org

December 7 to 9, 2000
First World Symposium on Reading and Writing and the International Conference on Early Childhood Education "Early Childhood in the Third Millenium"
Valencia, Spain
World Association of Early Childhood Educators, Averroes 3, Colonia del Retiro, 28007 Madrid, Spain
T +34.91.501.87.54 F +34.91.501.87.46
E info@waece.com
http://www.waece.com

December 8 to 15, 2000
The International Interdisciplinary Course on Children's Rights
Ghent, Belgium
The Children's Rights Centre, University of Ghent, Henri Dunantlaan 2 - B-9000 Gent, Belgium
T +32.9.264.6281 F +32.9.264.6493
E Kathleen.Vlieghe@rug.ac.be
http://www.allserv.rug.ac.be/~fspiessc/

January 8 to 26, 2001
26th Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Geneva, Switzerland
State party reports being considered: Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Latvia, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Palau and Saudi Arabia
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais Des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
T +41.22.917.9301 F +41.22.917.9022
E pdavid.hchr@unog.ch
http://www.unhchr.ch

January 29 to February 2, 2001
Pre-Sessional Working Group to the 27th Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Geneva, Switzerland
NGO reports to be considered: Bhutan, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Guatemala, Monaco, Oman, Turkey, United Republic of Tanzania
NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, c/o DCI, PO Box 88, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland
T +41.22.734.0558 F +41.22.740.1145
E dci-ngo.group@pingnet.ch

January 29 to February 2, 2001
Second Substantive Preparatory Committee for the UN Special Session on Children
New York, USA
For non-governmental issues (NGO issues), contact the NGO Participation Team, UNICEF House H-8A, 3 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, USA
F +1.212.824.6466 or +1.212.824.6486
For intergovernmental issues, contact Secretariat for the Special Session on Children UNICEF House, 3 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, USA

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Spring 2001
Children, Economics and the EU - Towards Child Friendly Policies
Kalle Elofsson, Save the Children Europe Group,
c/o Radda Barnen, Torsgatan 4, S-107 88
Stockholm, Sweden
T +46.8.698.9000 F +46.8.698.9010
E kalle.elofsson@rb.se

March 11 to 15, 2001
Third World Summit on Media for Children
European Children's Television Centre, 20 Analipseos
Street, Athens 152 35, Greece
T +301.68.51.258 F +301.68.17.987
E ectc@otenet.gr
http://www.childrens-media.org

June 11 to 15, 2001
Third Substantive Preparatory Committee for the UN Special Session on Children
New York, USA
For contact details, see Second Substantive Preparatory Committee above

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Child Rights Information Network Number 14 / June 2001

The Special Session on Children

IDS 01522

'The Special Session - so good so far' ***Per Miljeteig***

'A critical review of the Special Session' ***Philip Veerman***

'Spotlight on child rights' ***Jo Becker***

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a membership-driven organisation and network of over 1,100 child rights organisations around the world. It strives to improve the lives of children through the exchange of information about child rights and the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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CRIN Newsletter

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table of contents

CRIN Newsletter Number 14

The Special Session on Children

5 **Editorial**

6 News round-up

9 **Follow-up on macroeconomics**

9 Figuring out the true picture by Kalle Elofsson, Kenneth Melin, and Sven Winberg

12 Poor excuses for child poverty by Marie Wernham

15 **The Special Session on Children**

15 The Special Session - so good so far by Per Miljeteig

17 Factfile: Resolution 54/93 - Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children

19 A critical review of the Special Session by Philip Veerman

21 Factfile: What has happened in the ten years since the World Summit for Children?

23 Say Yes for Children by UNICEF

24 Spotlight on child rights by Jo Becker

26 Conflict and small arms - keeping up the pressure by Christina Torsein

28 'Making an arab world fit for children' by the Arab Resource Collective

29 Preparations of Central and Eastern Europe the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States for the UN Special Session on Children

31 Breaking down the barriers by Graeme Thompson

32 A decade fit for adolescents by Jessica Nott

34 Listening to young voices by Clare Feinstein

36 **Publications**

36 Key documents relating to the UN Special Session on Children

38 **Membership form**

39 **Calendar of events**

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Photo: Howard Davies / Save the Children

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Editorial

Within months, the United Nations will call a meeting that is the first real opportunity in ten years to move the human rights of children to the top of the world agenda. The Special Session on Children will be convened by the UN General Assembly in New York from 19-21 September 2001. It will bring together Governments, Heads of States, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other relevant actors. This edition of the CRIN Newsletter focuses on that meeting and the preparations that lead to it.

The purpose of the Special Session on Children is two-fold: (1) to review progress made for children since 1990 specifically by returning to the achievements of the goals of the World Summit for Children; and, (2) to assert a renewed commitment to children and develop a new global agenda for them in the forthcoming decade.

CRIN is an information network that supports the needs of the child rights community and the Special Session on Children provides an important focus of work for many of our members. To date, national, regional and international preparatory events have taken place so that the final plan of action from the Special Session can take into account views and perspectives of many different actors. In this changing climate, the importance of being able to access and effectively exchange information within the child rights community cannot be over-emphasised.

CRIN has developed a virtual theme desk on its website and a regular email service for the Special Session. Both provide regional updates, as well as the latest news, events and documentation regarding this important event. All information from the Child Rights Caucus is available on CRIN's website. At the preparatory meetings themselves, CRIN provides daily coverage by email and in printed format.

In this issue Per Miljeteig opens the suite of articles on the Special Session with a considered yet optimistic reflection on the benefits of involvement in the Special Ses..ion process. However, Philip Veerman introduces a note of caution regarding the process and questions whether the wide scale participation in the Special Session will actually do anything to promote child rights at all. Will it bring about increased government commitment and resulting shifts in economic policy to invest in children's well-being nationally.

This warning is to be taken seriously. With the second draft of the Outcome Document 'A World Fit for Children', recommendations to have a more rights-based approach were ignored. There were improvements in the third draft but Member States failed to agree on a final Outcome Document.

An article from the Child Rights Caucus outlines how this group (on behalf of hundreds of NGOs) has formulated a 'Children's Rights Agenda for the Coming Decade'. This group is advocating for an Outcome Document that is in effect an action plan for the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition, we bring together a wide range of diverse views to illustrate the multifarious activities, different agendas and voices that all connect to the Special Session in some way. There are regional case studies and another author reminds us that many issues need to be addressed before there is meaningful participation of children and young people in international events. We also look at the Global Movement for Children – an initiative spearheaded by six large organisations and Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel. And one author urges the child rights and the small arms communities to redouble their efforts, and calls on them to bridge the gap between two related UN meetings: the Special Session on Children and the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects.

The Special Session will focus on a number of clear goals and targets. One of these goals – infant and under-five mortality – seems likely to reiterate the promise made in 1990. But three of the goals (malnutrition, maternal mortality and access to safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation facilities) actually retreat from 1990 promises.

The end-decade review of follow-up to the World Summit for Children is expected to announce that some progress was made since 1990, but that actual achievement of its targets was less than impressive. Infant and under-five mortality only declined by 14 percent (rather than the goal of 33 percent), malnutrition declined by 17 percent (rather than 50 percent), there was little reduction in maternal mortality (rather than a 50 reduction) and universal access to safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation facilities is far from a reality.

Government commitment to a global agenda for children must be measured, first, by actual achievements of the goals of the World Summit for Children. Tempered with this sense of realism the second litmus test should compare goals of the Special Session on Children with promises made at the World Summit for Children.

If the world community, the UN General Assembly and Member States are truly to renew this commitment to children then they should not retreat from the 1990 goals.

The real challenge to NGOs, young people and other parts of civil society will be to ensure that the UN General Assembly and Member States make a commitment to real action that can, and will, be monitored, measured and implemented. Their promise to the world's children must build on promises of the past as articulated both by the World Summit on Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

News round-up

New Global Initiative to end all corporal punishment of children

A new Global Initiative has been launched to speed up the prohibition of all corporal punishment of children internationally. Its key message is that children have the same human right as adults to be protected from any form of violence, which includes being hit and humiliated.
In most States world-wide, many children, including babies, continue to be subjected to corporal punishment, significant numbers of whom suffer serious injury as a result. In many countries outside Europe, teachers continue to have authority to beat pupils and in at least 50 countries, whipping of juveniles is still used as a sentence of the courts or as punishment in penal institutions.
Through its work, the Global Initiative aims to:

- launch a wide information and education campaign to promote proper caring for, and eliminate violence against, children;
- forge an international alliance of human rights agencies, key individuals and international and national non-governmental organisations to unite against corporal punishment;
- make corporal punishment of children visible by building a global map of its prevalence and legal status, ensuring that children's views are heard, and charting progress towards ending it;
- lobby governments to systematically ban all forms of violence including corporal punishment and to develop public education programmes; and,
- provide technical assistance to support states with these reforms.

This initiative was launched during the Human Rights Commission session in Geneva in April 2001 and is already supported by the High Commissioner for Human Rights amongst others. Further information is available from the following website: www.endcorporalpunishment.org. The Global Initiative is now asking NGOs to sign up to its statement of aims. Further information about this can be obtained by emailing: info@endcorporalpunishment.org

Source: info@endcorporalpunishment.org

Macedonian mayors commit to children

The recently formed Mayor's Association, comprising mayors from each of Macedonia's 123 municipalities, and young people from UNICEF supported Babylon youth centres, attended the launch of Macedonia's 'Say YES for Children' campaign as part of national level activities relating to the Global Movement for Children on April 26 2001. Amongst the many activities which took place at the launch was the adoption of 'The Declaration of an Agenda for Children' and an announcement of the 'Mayor's Alliance for Children'. Delegates at the launch committed themselves to following the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the five-year strategy plan of the Mayor's Association, which will be co-ordinated with the nation's Ombudsperson for Children. The Mayor's Alliance for Children includes commitments to further the welfare and rights of the country's children. These include reviewing and including goals for children in the Association's strategy; providing training in child rights; development of local action plans with children; using the Mayor's Alliance to establish child-friendly cities and including young people in citizens' meetings or on the boards of decision-making councils. For further information, contact Monique Thormann. (mthormann@unicef.org)

Source: UNICEF

'The Berlin Commitment - pledging to create an environment fit for children

The Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia, hosted by the Foreign Ministries of Germany and Bosnia and Herzegovina with the support of UNICEF, (May 16 – 18 2001) served as a regional prelude to the first ever UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. Delegates from over 51 countries across Europe and Central Asia and the Holy See made a special pledge known as 'The Berlin Commitment' to create an environment fit for children in the region.
The 'Berlin Commitment' outlines goals for further development of child-friendly policies in the different States over the next 10 years. The conference is the culmination of a series of consultations between governments, civil societies, NGOs, young people, UNICEF, other UN agencies, the EU, the Council of Europe, OSCE and other regional bodies, all dedicated to improving the lives of children. Continued discussions in Berlin, in addition to the 'Berlin Commitment', will also result in a detailed report outlining strategies and recommendations for action. This is the first time that governments from Europe and Central Asia have come together and jointly committed themselves to further the efforts of implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
In brief, the 'Berlin Commitment' recognises that children:

- are citizens in their own right;
- must be consulted and involved in issues concerning them; and that
- investing in their development is the key to building a peaceful and prosperous society.

Furthermore, it focuses on the importance of:

- adjusting national legislation;
- providing the necessary funding;
- monitoring progress; and,
- taking other action necessary to realise the rights of children.

The 'Berlin Commitment' comprises a 20-point plan which lists key undertakings to combat and address poverty and social exclusion, violence and abuse, the severe impact of

transition in many countries, health and environmental questions, inter-generational justice, the state of education and the importance of on-going participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their lives.

Source: UNICEF www.unicef.org/newsline/01or47.htm

United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS

Alarmed by the accelerating epidemic and its global impact, the United Nations General Assembly has decided to convene a Special Session on HIV/AIDS at the highest political level. To be held from 25 to 27 June 2001 in New York, the Special Session aims to intensify international action to fight the epidemic and to mobilise the required resources. At the Special Session, high-level national delegations will discuss which action plans have proven most effective in addressing the AIDS situation in their own countries and what next steps are needed. Interactive round-tables will bring together government leaders, AIDS activists and experts and private sector partners to focus on key issues. Given the urgency of the epidemic, governments at the Special Session are expected to agree on a Declaration of Commitment that will outline priority areas where stronger action must be taken. These are likely to include prevention, improved access to care and treatment, care of children orphaned by AIDS, expanded public/private sector partnerships, the need for an accelerated multi-sectoral response to the epidemic and for resources commensurate with the crisis. In addition, it is expected that the Special Session will set a number of new concrete targets for action to fight HIV/AIDS, building on goals adopted at previous United Nations fora. These include the target agreed by some 150 heads of State and Government at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

Source: UNAIDS www.un.org/ga/aids/

The situation of children in Sudan

In a report issued on 16 May 2001, Save the Children (UK), a leading international children's charity, said that time is running out to prevent a major disaster in west Sudan. In the worst affected areas, one in three children are already suffering from malnutrition. Despite repeated warnings to the UK Government and the international community, children are dying due to lack of food, water and emergency medical treatment. Almost one million people are directly affected by a two-year drought in Darfur in west Sudan. The nutritional status of children is now at alarming levels with no prospect for improvement unless immediate action is taken. It will be six months before any harvest is due and all coping mechanisms are now breaking down. Over 400,000 people are critically short of water. More and more people are moving into the towns in search of food to survive. It is expected that rates of malnutrition, destitution and mortality will continue to rise over the next few months.

Source: Save the Children Press Office, Tel: +44 (0)20 7716 2280; Email: press@scfuk.org.uk

Côte d'Ivoire focuses on integrating Liberian children in education

Many Liberians sought refuge in Côte d'Ivoire during the 1990s as civil war tore their country apart. The end of the war made voluntary repatriations possible, and these began in 1997, organised by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, about 120,000 Liberians opted to remain in Côte d'Ivoire. For the past 10 years, UNHCR and other agencies have been paying for the refugee children to go to schools administered by the Adventist Relief Aid Agency (ADRA) and run according to the Liberian education system. However since the Liberians' situation is no longer an 'emergency', UNHCR proposed that the Ivorian government take over their schooling. The proposed integration of these children into schools prompted a recent meeting of officials of the Ivorian Ministries of Education and Defence and Civil Protection, Liberian and other education specialists and representatives of UN agencies and international NGOs. Côte d'Ivoire's authorities hope to integrate some 20,000 Liberian children into the education system in the next school year, which starts in October but has misgivings about how this project can be fully supported. In addition, participants at this meeting (Yamoussoukro, 15 May 2001) noted that, for the successful and complete integration of Liberian children in the Ivoirian education system, a number of hurdles must be overcome. The meeting enabled participants to examine the technical and socio-psychological obstacles facing the proposed project. Participants suggested a series of recommendations to ensure the successful implementation of this project.

Source: UN's IRIN Humanitarian Information Unit, Email: IRIN-WA@irin.ci - 15 May 2001

SADC moves to eliminate child labour in South Africa

The quest to stop the most abusive forms of child exploitation has entered a new era with the implementation of the International Convention to Eliminate Child Labour after a speedy ratification by more than 40 countries, seven of them Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states. These SADC members, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe, ratified the convention by 16 January. SADC Executive Secretary, Prega Ramsamy said the region was committed to the elimination of all forms of child labour. "Our member states are continuing to take various measures, including

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ratification of relevant conventions and the establishment of data banks to address the matter". According to the ILO, 250 million children between the ages of five and 14 work in developing countries and about 80 million of these are in Africa.

Source: Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SADC)
www.sardc.net/editorial/sanf/2001/1ss6/Nf1.html

Egyptian Parliament partially approves African Children's Charter

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kamal el-Shazli announced that Egypt's Parliament has recently approved most of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children's Charter). However, some parts have been rejected as they are contrary to Islamic law and Egyptian tradition. The Organization of African Unity (OAU)-sponsored charter, which has been in force since November 1999, aims to protect children from economic exploitation, child abuse and substance abuse. El-Shazli cited certain clauses as being objectionable such as for example, clauses permitting adoption, setting the minimum marriage age for girls at 18 and outlawing death sentences for pregnant and nursing women. He said Islam forbids adoption and that Egypt allows both marriage at 16 years of age and executions of women as early as two months after childbirth. Further information about the African Children's Rights Charter can be viewed at www.unhcr.ch/refworld/legal/instruments/children/afr_e.htm.

Source: UN Foundation, 11 May 2001 (Reuters/CNN.com, 6 May)
http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/meast/05/06/rights.egypt.children.reut/index.html

Jordan conference calls for the end to recruitment of child soldiers

A conference on child soldiers in Amman, Jordan, concluded with a call to end the recruitment of children, including girls, as soldiers and for the protection of children living under occupation. The three-day meeting was organised by UNICEF, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and the Jordanian Institute of Diplomacy. Its final declaration called on states to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that deals with the use of child soldiers before the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children takes place in September 2001. The conference's final declaration noted the correlation between child soldiers and the supply of small arms and also called on governments to prevent companies from promoting the use of children in conflict situations. However, with the case of Palestine, participants concluded that Palestinian children had not been systematically recruited to fight but had been caught up in violence in the region (Barbara Plett, BBC Online, 10 Apr). "It is fair to say the situation in Palestine has cast a long shadow over this conference," said Rory Mungoven, Coordinator of the child soldiers coalition. "But at the same time, we are concerned for children everywhere. Children are fighting and dying in every region of the world and we owe it to all of them." With more than 300, 000 child soldiers fighting in armed conflicts worldwide, it is hoped that this call for putting a stop to the further recruitment of child soldiers will be successful.

Source: UN Foundation – www.unfoundation.org

A gift to the children of the 21st century - global campaign to eradicate polio

As we enter a new millennium, the world has an historic opportunity to take concerted global action on behalf of the world's children and their future. Polio is caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system, resulting in paralysis and sometimes death. Throughout history, polio has crippled millions of people, mostly very young children from all social classes, both rich and poor. Today, between 10 and 20 million people of all ages are living with polio paralysis, which is almost always irreversible. And while thousands of new cases occur each year, more than 150 nations are now polio-free, and the disease has been eradicated in 90 percent of the world. The global polio eradication effort, co-ordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO), is a collaboration of many public and private partners, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which provides the oral polio vaccine; the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which offers technical expertise; and the service organisation Rotary International, whose 1.2 million members in 159 countries have made polio eradication the main focus of their fund-raising and volunteering. There are five steps which must be taken to eradicate polio: routine immunisation, mass immunisation, establishment of a surveillance system (to report suspected cases early on), 'mop-up' campaigns to keep the virus at bay, and finally, certification.

Source: The UN Foundation. www.unfoundation.org/spotlight/polio.cfm

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Figuring out the true picture

New studies of national budgets have shed fresh light on just how much is being done for children. Kalle Elofsson, Kenneth Melin, and Sven Winberg report.

Save the Children Sweden has been involved in the area of macroeconomics and children for some years. As independent consultant Stefan de Vylder points out in his article The Big Picture (CRIN Newsletter 13, November 2000), each area of macroeconomics has an impact on children. Here we look at the role of fiscal policies, an area of growing interest and one closely linked to Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Embedded in national and regional budgets are the answers as to how States parties 'to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation' (Article 4 of the CRC) translate their commitments to children into actual resources.

Ten years on from the Convention's signing, questions are being raised on just how much is being done for children and how policies are reflected in budget allocations.

To provide more much-needed information about this, Save the Children Sweden launched the International Child-focused Budget Study Project supporting initiatives in seven countries (Ethiopia, El Salvador, Palestine, Peru, South Africa, Sweden and Vietnam) to undertake analyses of state budgets. For all the participants in the study (except South Africa) it is a first step towards understanding how state budgets are built up and how children figure in policies and especially budget expenditure.

Some initial findings from the study show the following.

Generally, the intentions from the states favour the implementation of child rights. Many have increased spending towards fulfilling the rights of children, but in most cases, the increases are insufficient or insignificant. Most of the budgets lack detail on how big a share of the budget is directed at children in the health and social welfare sectors.

In Ethiopia, where an ambitious National Programme of Action for Children and Women was developed, it was found that this programme was not used at all by implementing agencies and the Government in terms of budget allocations and activities.

In South Africa, children in general and poor children in particular have been given attention, both in terms of policies and in actual budgeting. Education expenditure favours children and has been redirected to the poorer segments of the society. Thirty percent of the health budget is directed to services for children, a share that is set to increase. However this is not enough. Service delivery towards children's rights in health, nutrition and education is still poor compared with other countries with similar income levels.

Photo: Eli Reed / Magnum Photos

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In Palestine, a National Plan of Action for children was backed by the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Expenditure on basic education has increased dramatically as a result and participation in basic education rose by 43 percent. However, social welfare spending has decreased and only recently have children been seen as a priority.

In Vietnam, a National Plan of Action for children was adopted in 1991 with four top objectives including education for all children. Spending on education grew from 12 to 15 percent of the state budget between 1990 and 1997 - a dramatic increase in real terms; the country's gross domestic product (GDP) went up by 75 percent during this period. The increased spending also resulted in more school pupils being enrolled; from 89 percent in 1992 to 97 percent in 1997. However, those vulnerable poor children remain excluded.

In Sweden, a country that is considered one of the better countries in terms of child rights, children were still adversely affected by welfare cuts resulting from the financial crisis in the early 1990s. It was children in particular, who felt the effects of this crisis, which is not in line with the Convention.

The lack of detail about how children are targeted in the budgets makes it hard to estimate to what extent increased spending on social services actually benefits children. It is generally assumed that such spending does benefit them. Poor specification also makes it harder to see the links between what was actually spent at the local levels on children compared with national policies. The studies revealed the poor data concerning children. Not only was it difficult to see how much was actually spent, but it was even harder to see to what extent spending adequately addressed children's needs and secured their rights.

In several of the countries decentralisation is going ahead, something positive for children, as it means that decisions about who gets what would be at a local level and closer to those it concerns.

In Sweden, where decentralisation has developed further, the study pinpointed certain problems with this process. While the responsibility for the budget priorities moves down to local levels, it is still the State that has signed the Convention. Local authorities have their own agendas and priorities and, in this context, it becomes increasingly difficult for the State to guarantee a quality education for all.

Photo: Nic Cooper and Jon Hammond / Save the Children

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It requires competence and effort to get an overview and understanding of the complicated state budget and its process. Aggregated data, several ministries sharing responsibilities, foreign development assistance with programmes targeted at children and domestic programmes outside the regular budget all make understanding this process even more complicated. However, it is worth the effort, since some of the studies from the project indicate openings and possibilities as to how the budget process can be influenced. Helping politicians understand the implications can shift attention in children's favour.

The ratification of the Convention in the countries participating in the study (except for Palestine) put a focus on children's rights at both the policy and planning levels. Spending has increased in some areas that affect children, most notably that of education (although not Sweden). However, it seems likely that increased spending still fails to reach a country's poorest and most vulnerable young people.

The next step

Economists in the field of children's rights have introduced new ideas about identifying and understanding the structural mechanisms that violate children's rights. Progress is being made but much work remains to be done. Informal networks between all those involved in children's rights work have to be tightened and multidisciplinary approaches must be developed. Precise data regarding children's lives can help put their needs at the centre of the macroeconomic debate, but this requires contributions from different sources.

Kalle Eliasson and Kenneth Melin are programme officers at Rädda Barnen. Sven Wiréen is a senior adviser at Rädda Barnen.

Issue 13 of the CRIN Newsletter on 'Children and Macroeconomics' can be downloaded in electronic format from www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/CRINews13e.pdf. Hard copies available from CRIN (see address on back cover or email us at info@crin.org).

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Poor excuses for child poverty

Marie Wernham introduces the International Action Against Child Poverty Initiative.

A major conference on child poverty held in London on 26 February 2001 sparked a series of questions and led to an unusually broad spectrum of NGOs and faith groups joining together in an on-going attempt to answer them. Action against child poverty is urgent, complicated and largely ignored or misunderstood in macroeconomics. Targets have been set and the justification for immediate action based on the best interests of the child is clear.

The conference in London was convened by the UK Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and the UK Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short and thereby acknowledged the trend to integrate development and finance policy. It was also attended by the leaders of the World Bank, the IMF, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme(UNDP) as well as representatives from developed and developing countries, NGOs and faith groups.

Photo: Jenny Matthews / Network aid

An informal coalition of 16 NGOs and faith groups joined together to produce a comprehensive discussion paper for the conference entitled 'A Six Point Plan for Eliminating Child Poverty' based around the International Development Targets (IDTs). This contained a framework of action and adopts a child-centred approach which addresses the following areas holistically and coherently: macroeconomics (including more sustainable and predictable expenditure, untying aid, increased debt cancellation); education; health; HIV/AIDS; trade and investment; and the root causes of conflict and violence.

Discussions included specific proposals for a global purchase fund to provide cheap vaccines against childhood diseases; tax incentives to accelerate research into affordable drugs and vaccines for the poor; tax credits on donations of drugs and vaccines from the pharmaceutical industry; and new funds for universal primary education by the UK and Italian governments.

The NGOs and faith groups greeted these developments with cautious optimism. The widespread acknowledgement of the centrality of children to poverty reduction and the commitments made by different groups of actors on the day were strongly supported. However, in response, the group requested greater specificity on the health and education initiatives, especially on Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property rights (TRIPs), delivery systems, the integration of the new funds with nationally-owned education strategies and the need for quality, appropriate and accessible education. The issues of monitoring progress, the need to internationalise the initiative and concern at the omission of environmental and arms control issues were also raised.

Some key questions which the NGOs and faith groups are specifically interested in are:

- Who bears responsibility for the achievement of the 2015 IDTs especially those relating to child poverty?
- How can actors as diverse as the World Bank, the IMF, the UN, governments from developed and developing countries, NGOs, faith groups, the research community and the private sector work together to end child poverty?
- Is such collaboration feasible?
- Is it possible or even desirable to run a global campaign on child poverty ? Child poverty is an extremely complex issue which cuts across a range of processes and macroeconomics themes, including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), debt, trade and aid and their impacts on education, health, livelihoods and conflict.
- Can we recreate 'Jubilee 2000' - a global movement against child poverty or are we in new campaigning territory?

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However, despite the fear that this would prove to be yet another case of 'business as usual' once the players left the room, it was apparent that this conference offered something different. This could be seen from the sheer diversity of actors involved and the presence of so many 'heavyweights' from the international financial sector. This inspired NGOs and faith groups to form an official coalition, International Action Against Child Poverty on 24 April. This coalition intends to move the initiative forward, maintaining pressure on the actors present at the February conference. It will work towards the achievement of the IDTs, but also aims to influence the way in which these processes take place, in order to ensure the mainstreaming of children into decision-making at all levels and the meaningful participation of those affected by such decisions.

In order to help manage the coalition, sub-groups will help the group move forward in terms of structure, funding and defining its relationship to the Global Movement for Children (GMC) They will also look at an action-oriented programme of work which is linked to forthcoming events, such as the annual meetings of the World Bank and IMF, the G8 meeting in Genoa in July and of course, the UN Special Session on Children in September. The coalition seeks to use existing frameworks, such as these meetings, to monitor progress. It will campaign for child-centred, holistic approaches to poverty reduction to be included in all meetings of the financial sector. A strategy of consultation to facilitate ownership of the initiative by southern civil society, children and young people themselves is being developed.

One thing that is becoming increasingly clear amid the questions and complexities is that unless all the processes and themes of poverty reduction are treated more holistically, with the rights of the child mainstreamed during policy making decisions, then it is likely that 2015 will come and go with a predictable, if shameful, lack of cause for celebration. International Action Against Child Poverty is committed to ensuring that this will not be the case in the belief that there is no excuse for child poverty in the twenty-first century.

Marie Wernham is the advocacy officer at the Consortium for Street Children, a group of over 30 NGOs that supports projects for street-living and street-working children and children at risk of taking to street life in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The Consortium for Street Children is a member of the International Action Against Child Poverty coalition.

Photo: Dan Redding / Save the Children

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The Special Session - so good so far

Per Miljeteig is closely involved in the preparations for September and here offers an insider's view of the process

The UN General Assembly Special Session on Children is a high profile meeting of Heads of States, Governments, UN bodies and other agencies including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that will take place in September 2001 in New York. This meeting has been convened to review and evaluate the progress achieved for children since the World Summit for Children in 1990 which took place less than one year after the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted. Such a momentous event cannot be prepared for overnight and indeed, since the Special Session was convened in 1999 (Resolution 54/93), many preparations at national, regional and international level have taken place, the results of which will feed into the Special Session itself. The process is particularly interesting since participation from a wide range of stakeholders is encouraged, resulting in the involvement of NGOs (at both international and grassroots levels), faith groups, youth groups, alliances and coalitions of organisations as well as the more traditional involvement of Governments and relevant UN agencies.

Safely returned from New York, the epicentre of distorted proportions, it is time to reflect and bring things back to their right place. What felt like a big and boisterous fair when I was still in the middle of the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the Special Session gradually takes on different meanings. There are three Preparatory Committee meetings in advance of the Special Session itself, which took place 30 May to 2 June 2000, 29 January to 2 February 2001 and 11 to 15 June 2001.

The most potent image is that of the magic that happens when you bring together different people of all ages from all parts of the world. After a week of wall-to-wall meetings in the stuffy and not-so-glamorous basement suite of conference rooms in the United Nations building, a lot of energy is generated. There are endless meetings with heated negotiations and arguments over linguistic details. And then there is the noble art of reading accreditation passes that enable participants to see where in the hierarchy they have been placed and which doors they might open. Some of the energy that is created during this process evaporates but some is highly positive and communicates itself to others.

One could wonder what the point of getting involved in the UN hype is. It is worth spending the time and energy on such things that are so far removed from the daily reality that most of us face? This question remains to be resolved, as we have not come to the end of the Special Session process yet.

Being over half way through the process, my feeling is that it is worth being involved. It makes sense to invest energy in this process and to participate in it. NGOs in particular have a special responsibility to be even more alert and energetic in the subsequent rounds. There are several reasons for this and I will mention some below.

First, this is one of the rare times when the UN is invaded by hordes of real people, including children, who shake up the usual diplomatic patronage. The Special Session process is unique because it is open to, and encourages the participation of, grassroots NGOs that would otherwise never get close to the UN. The enormous and diverse body of expertise that these people represent together adds a much broader perspective to the discussions than are normally seen at UN conferences.

Second, those who came to the second Preparatory Committee meeting were all highly committed representing large constituencies. That means that they are not only speaking for themselves, but for millions of others. They also have a lot of people to work with on their return from New York. In that way, the Special Session and its preparations have a ripple effect with an impact on a large number of people. Equally a very large number of people, through their representatives, have a big effect on what is going on in New York, as these representative come, not only from the big, international NGOs, but also from small, grassroots organisations or national coalitions of NGOs.

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I am convinced that, despite its chaotic appearance, child rights NGOs have never operated in so orderly and focused a manner at a UN meeting before. There is a long tradition of constructive collaboration between NGOs to promote children's rights and to join forces to influence governments and the UN. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has become our guiding tool and provides a framework for the work that we do. This is demonstrated effectively with the example of the Child Rights Caucus, an alliance comprising a large number of NGOs which now appears with a 'no compromise' agenda aiming to give children's rights the highest and sharpest possible profile in the Special Session. However, on several occasions recently, some groups with extreme views tried to take over this agenda, yet they failed because they promoted views that were against the spirit of the CRC. They also failed because they underestimated the coherence among the other NGOs even when they tried to overtly influence the process. Whilst they generated a lot of annoyance and created unpleasant situations, they did not manage to have the impact they expected.

Photo: Hall Cooper and Jon Hammond / Save the Children

The Child Rights Caucus is an excellent example of what NGOs can achieve if they work together. It has already had a significant impact on the draft Outcome Document and the revised versions of this draft. This Plan of Action 'A World Fit for Children', will outline a renewed commitment and pledge for specific actions for children for the coming decade. The Child Rights Caucus has managed to establish a position vis-à-vis UNICEF and the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, which means that their views are carefully listened to. The almost endless work of a small Caucus drafting committee throughout the week might seem like a waste of time and energy, yet the fact is that this work greatly helped the official drafting committee, because it gathered and put in place comments and suggested amendments to the original text, paragraph by paragraph. These comments respond directly to the weaker parts of the draft, and are framed in language that promotes and strengthens the principles of the Convention.

Finally, I am hopeful because of the commitment that governments seem to have to this process. Large numbers of experts from the world's cities filled many of the delegations' seats. They listened attentively. Of course, there was a lot of ritual UN speak, but this enormous mobilisation shows that governments feel compelled to take the Special Session and its preparations seriously. Despite the many, and sometimes completely unrelated, agendas that might inspire governments' engagement, the NGO community should interpret this as a positive development. Our role in the rest of the process, and its follow-up, will be to serve as constant reminders of the commitments that the Special Session will finally formalise this September: commitments that speak to all of us – government and non-government alike, at both the global and local level.

Per Miljeteig is leader of the Forum for Barnekonvensjonen - The Norwegian NGO coalition for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For more information about the Special Session, visit UNICEF's website at www.unicef.org/specialsession or CRIN's website at www.crin.org/specialsession

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Factfile

Resolution 54/93 - Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children

The General Assembly, the highest policy-making body of the United Nations, issued Resolution 54/93 on 7 December 1999 to convene a Special Session on Children to be held on 19-21 September 2001 in New York, USA.

The resolution comprises 22 paragraphs that outline the Special Session and the process running up to it.

Why have a Special Session on Children?

The resolution states that the purpose of the Special Session is to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children. Furthermore, it calls for a renewed commitment for future action for children in the next decade, in the light of the resulting review of progress achieved since the World Summit for Children. It invites the participation of Heads of State and Governments in the Special Session.

How? – What is the Process?

The resolution emphasises the importance of establishing a participatory process at national, regional and international levels and encourages partnerships between a wide range of stakeholders, including children and young people, so that momentum required to take forward children's rights and needs will be achieved. It also sets up the process of an open-ended Preparatory Committee comprising member state representatives, so that organisational issues can be addressed (including the participation of a broad range of actors, agenda setting and preparing for the outcome of the Special Session itself).

Who should Participate?

The resolution encourages the full participation of member states and furthermore, invites Heads of States and Governments to assign personal representatives to the Preparatory Committee.

It requests that the Secretary-General, with support from UNICEF, provides regular and substantive input to the preparatory process as well as at the Special Session itself. This includes the preparation of a report outlining emerging issues for consideration at the first Preparatory Committee meeting.

Photo: Julia Eichart / Save the Children

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By this resolution, other organisations and bodies of the United Nations system are invited to actively participate in the preparations for the Special Session and it requests that a co-ordinated response resulting from this wider participation is provided to the Special Session. Furthermore, it invites the Committee on the Rights of the Child to provide its input to the preparatory process and at the Special Session itself.

In addition, the resolution also invites other relevant experts to participate in the preparatory process, such as the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and other relevant actors in the implementation of the Plan of Action, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This is particularly important from the NGO perspective, as the importance of their active involvement in the preparatory process is formally emphasised.

How to Participate in the Special Session

The resolution broadly outlines key ways in which stakeholders can participate in the Special Session and the preparatory process. This includes the following.
Governments and other relevant organisations, particularly UNICEF, are invited to undertake progress reviews since the World Summit for Children and are encouraged to develop preparatory activities at national, regional and international levels. This will contribute to the preparations for the Special Session and will also facilitate partnerships for and with children.
The resolution reiterates its request for the Secretary-General to submit a review of the implementation and results of the World Declaration and Plan of Action. This should emphasise best practice and problems encountered during the implementation phase. To ensure an even broader range of stakeholders involved in the process, States members of specialised agencies that are not members of the UN are invited to participate in the Special Session process as observers.

Equality in Participation

The importance of full participation of least developed countries in the Special Session process was recognised and in order to support the attendance of such countries, it was recommended that Governments be invited to make contributions to a trust fund with this purpose in mind.

Assistance in Implementation

The resolution requests that the Secretary-General assists national Governments in their assessment of, and reporting on, the implementation of the World Summit for Children Plan of Action, if they request such support.

Information and Communications/Documentation

The Secretary-General is also requested to work closely with UNICEF to mount a public information campaign so that awareness of children's needs and rights and the Special Session itself are heightened. Governments are encouraged to do this on a national basis.

Adapted from: Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Resolution S-24/93, adopted by the General Assembly on 7 December 1999. [A/RES/S-24/93, dated 17 December 1999]
[Source: www.unicef.org/specialsession/document.html]

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A critical review of the Special Session

What's the point of attending the Special Session? Philip Veerman poses some searching questions.

Nearly 200 world leaders and a staggering 3,683 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are invited to participate in New York in the United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly on Children in September. The purpose is to reconfirm a global commitment to children at the onset of the new millennium. However, whilst the Special Session might bring together Heads of State and NGOs and will undoubtedly be accompanied by a storm of publicity and photo opportunities, the question is, what will it actually do to promote children's rights?

Will it bring about the 'momentous shift in national investments for child survival and development' called for by UNICEF's Executive Director, Carol Bellamy? Will it bring about more commitments by governments and reconfirmation of previous yet unmet commitments and put children higher on the political agenda?

It doesn't look like either will happen.

The political will seems to be lacking to use this General Assembly Special Session to change course and to announce major commitments. This might include rich countries giving debt relief to poor countries. Jan Vandemoortele, formerly a chief policy analyst of UNICEF, now working for UNDP, wrote that 'if the world were to invest an extra 30 cents out of every $100, then all children could be healthy, well-nourished and in primary school' (CRIN Newsletter 13, pp 30, November 2000).

By the end of May flurries of preparatory meetings had resulted in a second revised draft Outcome Document for the September meeting. The document, ambitiously titled 'A World Fit for Children', which is now being presented to diplomats and NGOs, is full of nice words but makes little mention of government responsibility. The document states, for example, that 'access to education is a human right' but does not mention a commitment to public education. This thereby provides an escape clause for governments. And it is worth noting that 113 million children (most of them girls) are currently out of school.

The document also calls upon the nations of the world to 'put children first' and states that "In all undertakings, the best interests of the child shall always be our primary consideration".

Photo: Plattemala Pelerna / Save the Children

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My organisation, Defence for Children International, actively participated in the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since it was adopted in 1989, this human rights treaty on children has been ratified by all countries in the world except Somalia, which lacked a central government to do so, and the United States. During the drafting process (and for good reason) we never asked to 'put children first' but simply that the rights of the child be taken no less seriously than those of other human beings.

The Convention took ten years to finalise and the individuals that drafted it succeeded in establishing a human rights approach for children and marked the end of a mainly charity-based approach to children's issues.

The second revised draft Outcome Document, which was released 17 May, is a weak text that hardly mentions the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In fact, in some ways it is weaker than its previous version because the number of references to the Convention on the Rights of the Child has actually been reduced. The rights perspective has not been strengthened; and it is expected that many members of the Child Rights Caucus will be disappointed with this version of the document.

Furthermore, the second revised draft Outcome Document almost completely bypasses a very urgent problem: the number of children in prisons, reform schools and remand homes is growing at an appalling rate and the pendulum has swung back to a 'punishment' approach, not the needed rehabilitation approach.

There are reasons to worry that the Special Session will not meet its mark. In May the government of the United States discussed the document with UNICEF. This seems to be an embarrassing attempt to weaken the text even further.

The second revised draft Outcome Document is elaborately decorated with well-turned phrases, but lacks substance.

Twelve years after the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted, we live in a world where:

- 30 million infants receive no immunisation and 11 million die annually from preventable causes;
- 200 million children are malnourished;
- 250 million children (between five and 14) are 'economically active'; and,
- 50-60 million children are engaged in intolerable forms of child labour (300,000 of them being child-soldiers).

This late in the game, can things still be corrected? Can the outcome from the Special Session on Children be improved? The Third Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee held in June is the last preparatory meeting before the world leaders finally meet in New York in September. NGOs will continue to push for a more rights-based approach at these meetings, but to date most of the alternative text for the revised Outcome Document seems to be ignored.

All of this raises one critical question that we must ask ourselves: why be involved in such a costly event when the outcome seems scandalously low?

Dr. Philip Veerman is the president of Defence for Children International (DCI), an independent NGO set up during the International Year of the Child (1979) to ensure on-going, practical, systematic and concerted international action particularly directed towards promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

Photo: Neil Cooper / Save the Children

Factfile

What has happened in the ten years since the World Summit for Children?

Photo: Mike Goldwater / Network

In the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children (WSC) 1990, targets to improve the well being of children worldwide were established. The question to consider now is whether the last decade has seen significant progress in the achievement of these goals.

Some progress has certainly been made, although there is also evidence of significant shortfalls. Generally speaking, following both the WSC and the adoption of Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), children are now higher than ever before on public and political agendas. After the World Summit, for example, 155 countries developed national programmes of action (NPAs) aimed at implementing the Summit goals. There has been significant follow-up that has been comprehensively monitored by a variety of agencies, including UNICEF.

Furthermore, there is increased awareness and commitment to child rights with the success of the Convention. This has included significant new international standards in such areas as child labour, children in armed conflict and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in promoting implementation of the Convention must also be noted.

In more specific terms the following progress has been made.

- Peri-natal mortality has significantly decreased
- Two-thirds of neo-tetanus deaths have been prevented
- Polio has been almost completely eradicated
- Use of Oral Rehydration Therapy is now wide-spread
- The use of Vitamin A supplements and salt iodisation has increased

However, during the last decade, various factors have worsened the situation for children. These have included the HIV/AIDS pandemic, political instability and armed conflict, debt, social exclusion and insufficient development assistance. The persistence of poverty in particular is a major barrier to the achievement of the World Summit goals. The statistics are daunting: only one-third of low-income countries achieved the major goals of the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Children. A summary of gains and unfinished business in achieving the major goals is shown in Box 1.

With the Special Session for Children in September 2001 comes an opportunity for the international child rights community: an opportunity not only to review progress achieved since the 1990 World Summit, but also to make a renewed commitment to the children of the world.

Issues previously excluded from the agenda, such as the right of the child to participate, will need to be supported. Issues requiring a clearer mandate, such as child protection and the rights of children in difficult circumstances, will be better articulated.

The process will benefit from the recognition of the need for clearer targets that will address all situations children endure today. Building on past experience, the UN Special Session for Children should commit itself to developing a new global agenda for children, supported by renewed vigour and commitment from the international community to protect and nurture the children of the world.

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Box 1: Meeting the seven major goals adopted by the World Summit for Children balance sheet

Goal	Gains	Unfinished business
Infant and under-five mortality: *reduction by one third in infant mortality and U5MR*	• More than 60 countries achieved the goal of U5MR. • At the global level U5MR declined by 14 percent.	• U5MR rates increased in 14 countries (9 of them in sub-Saharan Africa) and were unchanged in 11 others. • Serious disparities remain in U5MR within countries by income level, urban vs. rural, and among minority groups.
Malnutrition: *reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-5 children by half*	• Malnutrition declined by 17 percent in developing countries. South America achieved the goal with a 60 percent reduction in underweight prevalence over the decade.	• 149 million children are still malnourished, two thirds of them in Asia. The absolute number of malnourished children has increased in Africa.
Maternal mortality: *reduction between 1990 and the year 2000 of the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by half*	• There has been heightened awareness of causes leading to high MMR, but little tangible progress.	• There is no evidence that maternal death rates have declined significantly over the last decade. • 515,000 women still die every year as a result of pregnancy and childbirth. A woman in sub-Saharan Africa faces a 1 in 13 chance of dying during pregnancy and childbirth.
Water: *universal access to safe drinking water*	• 816 million additional people obtained access to improved water supplies over the decade.	• Some 1.1 billion people still lack access. Global coverage increased by only 3 percent, to 82 percent. • Water quality problems have grown more severe in a number of countries during the decade. • Coverage in low-income areas remains low, especially in informal settlements.
Universal access to basic education: *achievement of primary education by at least 80 percent of primary-school-age children*	• Net primary school enrolment has increased in all regions and reached 82 percent globally.	• Over 100 million children of primary school age remain out of school, especially working children, children affected by HIV/AIDS, conflict and disability, children of the poor or ethnic minorities and rural children.
Adult literacy: *reduction of adult illiteracy rate to at least half its 1990 rate, with special emphasis on female literacy*	• Adult illiteracy has declined from 25 percent to 21 percent.	• Absolute number of illiterate adults has remained at about 880 million over the last decade worldwide, with numbers of illiterates increasing in most regions. • Illiteracy is increasingly concentrated among women, especially in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Adapted from:
We the Children: End-decade review of follow-up to the World Summit for Children, Report of the Secretary-General (advance unedited copy)
Presentation by Dr. Lincoln Chen, Deputy Executive Director of the Rockefeller Foundation - First Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly for Follow-Up to the World Summit for Children in 2001: 30 May 2000. Summaries of Panel discussions at the First Substantive Session - excerpts from the report of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for the Follow-up to the World Summit for Children on its First Substantive Session (A/S-S/4-3/(Part II)) Source: www.unicef.org/specialsession

Photo: Howard Davies / Save the Children

83

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'Say Yes for Children'

UNICEF reports on the launch of the Global Movement for Children

'Say Yes for Children' was the theme of rallies, parades, concerts and street theatre, TV and radio spots in April and May of this year, as local and national campaigns in more than 70 countries kicked off the Global Movement for Children. This is an international collaboration of governments, organisations and individuals committed to improving the lives of children everywhere.

This movement is represented by two international champions of human rights, Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel, who are reaching out to all leaders and sectors of society worldwide. It is the initiative of six organisations: the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Netaid.org Foundation, PLAN International, Save the Children, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and World Vision.

The slogan, 'Say Yes for Children' was emblazoned on T-shirts and buttons as well as being printed in newspapers and on leaflets, all for the purpose of expanding and strengthening the circle of those who would change the way the world views and treats children. Activities are planned in at least two dozen other countries leading up to September's Special Session on Children in New York and will bring attention not only to the meeting but also to the conditions facing children and their families world-wide and to the ways they can be bettered.

With the 'Say Yes for Children' campaign, hundreds of thousands of people are signing pledge forms or voting in support of a child's rights to grow in health, peace and dignity. Voting takes place on the Movement's website (www.gmfc.org) where presidents and queens, government officials and celebrities, NGO leaders and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), parents, teachers, children and adolescents themselves are voting or signing pledge forms.

The pledge for children includes a list of ten imperatives or obligations to children, which are:

- Leave no child out;
- Put children first;
- Care for every child;
- Fight HIV/AIDS;
- Stop harming and exploiting children;
- Listen to children;
- Educate very child;
- Protect children from war;
- Protect the earth for children; and,
- Fight poverty by investing in children.

Photo: Giacomo Pirozzi / UNICEF

'Say Yes for Children' campaign has already had a significant impact and brought people from around the world together. In Mozambique in early April, film crews taped Nelson Mandela, Graça Machel and Kamo Masilo, a 12 year old South African boy, cast their pledge on the Global Movement for Children's website. This was a prelude to the official launch in London later that month. In Turkey, Mrs. Nane Annan, wife of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, heard child representatives from 41 countries from Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltic States challenge countries to go beyond words and make the protection of children their number one priority. Mrs. Annan then signed the first pledge for that region. In Mexico City, thousands of children, young people and adults gathered at the largest children's museum to make their pledge, while in China, 'Say Yes to Children' was launched at a banquet in Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

Say Yes and the Special Session on Children

The 'Say Yes for Children' campaign is directly related to what happens in September at the Special Session for Children. The ten imperatives for action are core to the declaration of commitment found in 'A World Fit For Children', the document prepared for the Special Session through a series of regional consultations and preparatory committees. The tally of the 'Say Yes for Children' pledges, which come in through the website and on the printed forms will be presented to the delegates gathered at the Special Session. Since those signing the pledge also identify three issues that are most pressing in their country, the disaggregation of these opinions can provide a picture of public aspirations and will serve to inform decisions about policies and programmes.

Beyond the Special Session

But both the 'Say Yes for Children' campaign and the UN Special Session on Children are only the most immediate and most obvious aspects of the new Global Movement for Children. With its roots in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this new Movement has taken on the challenge of transforming the world into a place where children are nurtured and protected and where each child is allowed to enjoy the fullness of their rights. While the Global Movement for Children is the initiative of six organisations, its collective force is a function of the work of hundreds of NGOs and other international organisations and thousands of individuals, all of whom are driven by their commitment to the rights of children.

UNICEF

For further information on the Global Movement for Children, please visit: www.gmfc.org or www.unicef.org or contact: cwoods@unicef.org

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Spotlight on child rights

The Child Rights Caucus is advocating for a child rights focus at the Special Session but, as Jo Becker reports, they can't afford to take the pressure off.

The Child Rights Caucus involves hundreds of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) around the world that are committed to protecting and promoting the rights of children. The primary goal of the Caucus is to promote full implementation and compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to ensure that child rights are given priority during the Special Session on Children and its preparatory process.

Recognising that the 1990 World Summit on Children focused particularly on issues of survival and development, a focus of the Caucus has been to advocate on behalf of the full range of children's rights as expressed in the Convention. As part of this effort, one of the first activities of the Caucus was to formulate a 'Children's Rights Agenda for the Coming Decade'. This agenda was developed based on intensive discussions during the First Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee and e-mail consultations with organisations all around the world. The document puts forward key issues for priority consideration at the Special Session, together with specific recommendations for action. It was circulated prior to the Second Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee, having been formally endorsed by more than sixty international and national organisations. Between the first and the second Preparatory Committee meetings, the Child Rights Caucus used this document and the basis for it, in discussions with UNICEF and government on the outcome being planned from the Special Session.

During the second Preparatory Committee meeting in early 2001, the Caucus wrote a position paper to provide a general comment on the first draft of the Outcome Document being considered by governments as the plan of action for children for the next decade. The position paper stressed that the Outcome Document should represent an action plan for the full implementation of the CRC and put forward a set of criteria for the document. It emphasised the need for an action focus, a restructured document, strengthened monitoring mechanisms and also identified significant gaps in the current text. The paper was the basis for an oral statement during a plenary and was distributed to government delegations.

The Caucus, in consultation with other caucuses, prepared an alternative Outcome Document text, in the form of a line-by-line edit of the draft Outcome Document. This text was

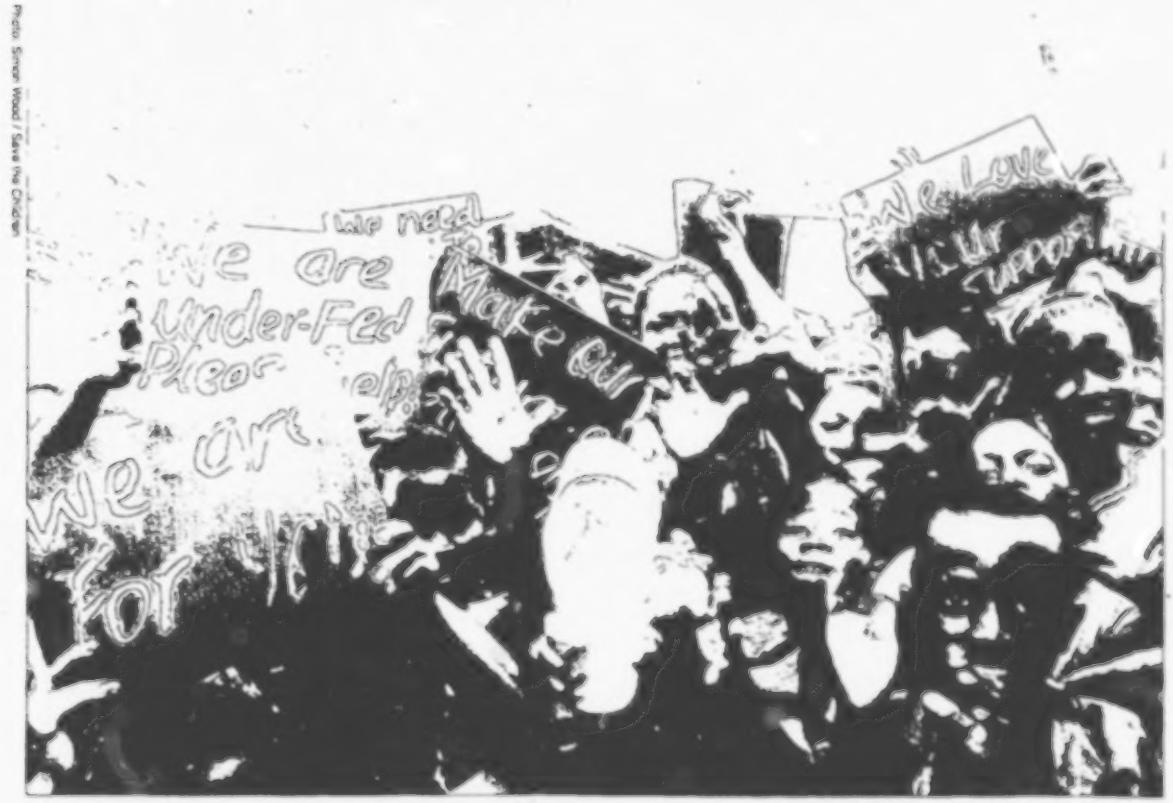

Photo: Simon Wood / Save the Children

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Photo: Leah Gordon / Save the Children

intended to provide specific and detailed text in order to strengthen the final Outcome Document. It contrasts with the more general comments of the position paper.

The alternative text incorporated inputs from nearly every NGO caucus meeting during the second Preparatory Committee meeting (both thematic as well as regional caucuses) and more than seventy-five individual organisations. It expanded the goals of the document substantially, and identified five main priorities:

- eradication of child poverty;
- education;
- health and HIV/AIDS;
- protection from violence; and,
- participation.

It added text on issues that had not been adequately addressed by the initial draft and proposed language to strengthen monitoring mechanisms and stress the importance of linking the monitoring of Special Session commitments with the monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Members of the Caucus also formed a lobbying sub-group to identify NGO delegates on government delegations, identify and reach out to sympathetic delegations and share information about government positions and government statements.

Every evening during the second Preparatory Committee meeting, the Child Rights Caucus convened a Linkage Caucus, offering an opportunity for thematic and regional caucuses to share information with each other and present inputs to the Alternative Text. During the last few days of the Preparatory Committee meeting, youth delegates also used the Linkage Caucus to share conflicts and difficulties that had emerged within this group.

In the lead-up to the Third Preparatory Committee meeting (11-15 June 2001), the Caucus collected comments from its members on the revised draft Outcome Document issued by the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee in mid-March. These were used to produce a new position paper and alternative text, which were circulated to governments during the informal consultations held in New York from 1-3 May. The Caucus also held a briefing on the two documents for government missions to the UN on 15 May.

During the Third Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee, the Caucus further revised its alternative text and continued to coordinate the Linkage Caucus, so as to enable various caucuses to share information and strategies with each other. It also continued lobbying in favour of an outcome for the Special Session that will be firmly rooted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and which will facilitate its full implementation.

Jo Becker is a member of the co-ordinating group for the Child Rights Caucus and the advocacy director of the Children's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch.

The Caucus is currently coordinated by a co-ordinating group elected at the second Preparatory Committee meeting, which includes representatives from each region and two youth members. Its members are Ming Viado from Plan International (Asia); Benjy Francis, Africa Cultural Center (Africa); Horacio Lagarraga, Argentinian Society of Pediatrics (Latin America and the Caribbean); Youssef Hajjar, Arab Resource Collective (Middle East/North Africa); Tom Burke (youth); Sabrina Bandali, (youth); Jo Becker, Human Rights Watch; and Bill Bell, Save the Children UK.

All Caucus documents mentioned are available on the CRIN Website at www.crin.org/specialsession

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Child rights and small arms - keeping up the pressure

Christina Torsein discusses the opportunity offered by the UN Special Session on Children and the UN Conference on the 'Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects' to bridge the gap between the child rights and the small arms community.

"During the 1990s, more than two million children died as a result of armed conflict, more than three times that number were permanently disabled or seriously injured and some twenty million were displaced or became refugees" (Article 34, 'A World Fit for Children'. Revised draft text submitted by the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children, A/AC.256/CRP.6/Rev.1).

The impact of small arms proliferation is clear: children around the world are suffering devastating consequences because of conflict in their communities. This year, two specific events will address the impact of small arms proliferation on children. In July, the United Nations will be hosting a conference on the 'Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects' and then, in September, the UN will host the Special Session on Children. The UN 2001 conference, as the small arms conference is commonly referred to, will focus on the proliferation of small arms by addressing the issues of arms brokering and weapon marking, tracing and collection. In a similar light, the Special Session on Children, while discussing issues ranging from education, HIV/AIDS and violence against children also discusses war-affected children.

Both conferences mark a turning point in the areas of children's rights and small arms, as they present an opportunity for states to move forward with concrete action on these issues. Action is needed at every level – whether it is local programmes for children and their families, or regional or national legislation. In addition, the adoption of international agreements and conventions is fundamentally important to the protection of children. The past decade has seen significant advances in this area, such as the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Summit on Children; the publication of Graça Machel's groundbreaking study on the impact of armed conflict on children; and the development of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which has yet to be ratified.

Photo: Howard Davies / Save the Children

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There is now increased recognition that children suffer devastating consequences during war. The issue of child soldiers has also been the subject of much focus over the past few years. In recognition of this, the Canadian government hosted an International Conference on War-Affected Children in September 2000. Despite all the work that is being done on these issues, there still remains a lack of dialogue between the small arms and children's rights communities. Furthermore, governments themselves are only just starting to make the link between small arms and their impact on children. Governments and inter-governmental organisations are key actors, since they draw up legislation and implement policies affecting children, in addition to providing humanitarian and development aid.

The two UN conferences provide a forum for discussion for both government delegates and NGOs. They should be seen as the start of a process, rather than the end. Both have involved Preparatory Committee meetings in the run up to their main conferences and both have Programme of Action documents (the working documents produced in the preparations to the main conference). Yet it remains to be seen what the final outcome of both processes will be. Some think that the Special Session is not focusing enough attention on war-affected children. Others within the small arms community feel that the humanitarian impact of small arms is not being adequately addressed during their discussions.

'A World Fit for Children', the working document of the Special Session on Children, recognises the need to protect children from violence and conflict. It states that children have the right to be protected and that societies must ensure that no form of violence against children is ever considered acceptable. In addition, measures should be taken to protect children from violence as well as from the impact of armed conflict and forced displacement, whilst ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law. It argues that all countries should adopt legislation to protect children from violence, including eliminating the use of child soldiers and threats posed by war materials, (e.g. land mines) and curbing the illicit flow of small arms which victimise children. This calls for state action and recognises state responsibility in the protection of children.

Similarly, the UN 2001 Conference Programme of Action document discusses the humanitarian impact caused by the proliferation and misuse of small arms. During the third Preparatory Committee meeting, a number of states called for the preamble of the working document to recognise the impact of the proliferation of small arms on women and children and the threat this causes to human security. Both documents also call for respect of international humanitarian law.

NGOs have been involved in both processes, participating in the Preparatory Committee meetings, lobbying and campaigning, as well as preparing background papers for delegates. Civil society organisations have a recognised role to play in the conference processes as they set a progressive agenda and hold governments accountable to any commitments made. However, the documents that are agreed to at the conferences are not legally binding mechanisms thus raising questions surrounding states' commitments to the final documents.

Regardless of the conference outcomes, it is crucial that both governments and NGOs work together to bridge the gap in the work surrounding the UN 2001 Conference and the Special Session. Follow-up and implementation are key to both processes. The conferences themselves should be seen as the beginning of new dialogue and as an opportunity for further policymaking and agenda setting.

There are review conferences planned for both processes. With this regard, it is key that states keep the issues of war-affected children and the impact of small arms proliferation on children high on their policy agendas.

Christina Torsein is an analyst at the British American Security Information Council (BASIC). For further information on the UN 2001 Conference please visit the IANSA website at www.iansa.org. BASIC, in collaboration with International Alert and Saferworld, is producing a series of briefing papers for the UN 2001 Conference - known as the 'Biting the Bullet' project. See www.basicint.org. One of these briefings to be published in July for the UN 2001 Conference, is on building a framework for international action to address the impact of small arms on children.

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Regional preparations for the UN Special Session

'Making an arab world fit for children' - The Arab Resource Collective presents regional preparations for the Middle East and North Africa region for the Special Session.

A requirement of the United Nations Special Session on Children, as stated by the General Assembly (Resolution 54/93) is that regional reviews regarding progress made for children since the World Summit for Children are prepared. In accordance with this, the Arab world, along with other regions world wide, has held a series of regional preparatory events as part of the Special Session process.

The first of such regional events was a 'Youth Forum on 21st Century Issues', Amman, Jordan, 29 October to 1 November 2000. This forum brought together over 120 young people from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to participate in discussions concerning the Global Movement for Children. From this, a 'Call for Action' on youth issues in the region was prepared.

This was followed by the 'Civil Society Organizations' Forum on Childhood; Rabat, 12 to 16 February 2001. The main objectives of this event were to:

1. take stock of the Arab/MENA region's achievements for children during the 1990s;
2. examine issues related to children's development;
3. develop frameworks, set priorities and identify mechanisms for improving the state of children in Arab countries; and to,
4. expand the circle of partners involved in children's issues and develop a framework for future cooperation.

The outcomes from this meeting were 'The Rabat Declaration' and the Rabat Forum Recommendations, outlining how to improve the rights and well being of children in the Arab World.

At the following *'Regional Symposium on Childhood', Beirut, Lebanon, 24 to 27 April 2001*, a 'formal gathering' of Arab Governments and the NGO sector met and produced the Outcome Document 'Trends Towards an Arab World Fit for Children' and 'The Beirut Recommendations'. These will form part of the regional recommendations from the Arab World and will be discussed and revised in a 'High Level Arab Conference' in Cairo in July 2001. The outcomes from this event will then feed directly into the Special Session meeting in September 2001.

To the Arab child rights community and, indeed, to the Special Session process itself, it is very important that preparatory activities occurring at the regional level are linked to those at the international level. This is primarily because of:

- the effect to date of the Arab discourse on children's rights;
- the active participation of the Arab World in this international process; and,
- the Arab contribution to developing a future agenda for children.

The Arab Resource Collective (ARC) has been particularly active linking preparatory activities at the regional and international levels. ARC held a regional workshop from May 31 and June 3, 2001 the objective of which was to increase collaboration with partners in childhood programmes and to contribute to the establishment of the new global agenda for children, particularly its manifestations in the Arab region.

Participants at the ARC workshop discussed the following documents: the revised draft Outcome Document for the Special Session on Children; the alternative text prepared by the Child Rights Caucus; the Rabat Recommendations and the Beirut Recommendations. In addition, ARC drafted recommendations, to be taken to the third Preparatory Committee meeting in New York. The participants of this workshop came from five Arab countries, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and Yemen. Many of these will have already participated in the previous two Preparatory Committee meetings as well as the Rabat Forum and the Beirut Symposium.

In addition to the opportunity provided by the Special Session to contribute to a reaffirmed commitment to children, many new partnerships and alliances can be formed, as child rights organisations world wide come out in force. For example, on their return from the second Preparatory Committee meeting (February 2001), participants from Palestine decided to form the Palestine Child Rights Coalition. This alliance of NGOs has now invited other NGOs, which are active in advocacy and support the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to join the coalition. Furthermore, on a regional level, through its participation in regional fora, the Arab World has been able to articulate the needs and requirements of children and societies in its region, which will be fed into the Special Session and the development of a new global agenda for children.

The Arab Resource Collective (ARC) is an NGO supporting children in the Arab World. For further information on the Palestine-Child Rights Coalition, please contact Ms. Assia Habash at amanikmi@p-ol.com

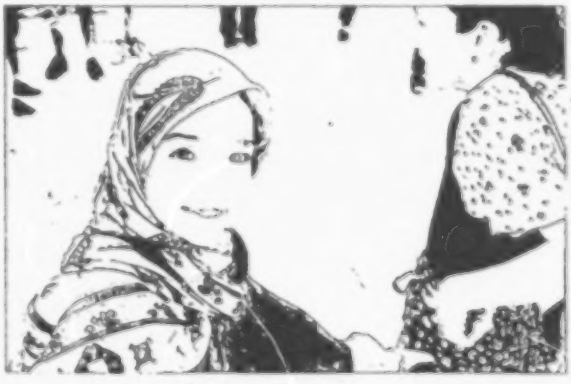

Photo: Peter Fryer / Save the Children

89

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Regional preparations for the UN Special Session

Preparations of Central and Eastern Europe the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States for the UN Special Session on Children.

Photo: Howard Davies / Save the Children

In the run-up to the UN Special Session on Children, all sorts of preparations are taking place at national, regional and international levels. Child-rights focused organisations throughout the world are finalising regional statements, commenting on the draft Outcome Document, 'A World Fit for Children' and attending conferences and meetings in preparation for this key global event.

In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the Baltics and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), civil society has participated in a series of NGO consultations. At the national level, the reports from the 'Civil Society – To Russia's Children' conference and the National Civil Society Conference 'Change the World with Children' in Ukraine both list a series of action points for the improvement of the welfare of children in the region. It is hoped that these national civil society experiences will contribute to the new Global Agenda for Children, to be adopted by the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in September 2001.

At the regional level, several key events have taken place to support consultations between different Civil Society actors. These are as follows.

The Regional Consultation of Civil Society Organisations - Bucharest, Romania, 8 to 10 April 2001. At this event, a new agenda for children and key documents were drafted, including a regional vision paper, 'A Region Fit for Children' and an open letter, which was later presented to the delegates of the inter-governmental conference in Berlin. 'A Region Fit for Children' is a clear call to action in a number of key areas, arguing that the rights of more than 120 million children and young people are fundamental to the future development of these new and emerging democracies. The Open Letter to Berlin represents the call of civil society to the government leaders meeting in Berlin, providing a concise overview of the most urgent priorities for children in the region.

Towards a Young People's Agenda for Europe and Central Asia – Budapest, Hungary, 23 to 29 April 2001. This conference of young people from all over Europe and Central Asia developed a new agenda, successfully fostered solidarity amongst the young people and prepared recommendations to submit to the Berlin Intergovernmental Conference. Also in the form of an open letter, this added the perspectives of the young participants to the process.

Children's Day Celebration – Istanbul, Turkey, 2 April 2001. This event brought children from 41 countries together to discuss child rights and priorities for action over the next decade. With Mrs. Nane Annan, wife of the UN General Secretary in attendance, it also acted as the regional launch of the 'Say Yes for Children' campaign, mobilising the Global Movement for Children in this region.

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Conference of CIS Member States on the preparation for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, Minsk, 26 to 27 April 2001. The conference outputs include the Concluding Document of the Conference of CIS Member States, which formalised participants' areas of key focus for the well being of children in their region.

Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia, Berlin, Germany, 16 to 18 May 2001. Participants discussed summaries of the End-Decade Reviews of progress for children in the region as well as new challenges for children in the next decade. It also considered proposals from NGOs and young people. The Statement of Berlin and a new agenda for children were developed, which will feed into the Special Session.

Generation in Jeopardy conference – Stockholm, Sweden, 18 to 20 June 2001. This conference reviewed trends and issues facing children in the region and strengthened alliances concerned with the situation of children. It produced The Stockholm Statement for the UN Special Session.

Finally, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has given their approval to a political statement for the Special Session. This statement reaffirms the commitment of the governments to the principles agreed to at the World Summit for Children on September 30, 1990 and, recognises the importance of the standards enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, it recommits them to comply with its implementation. The statement outlines how they will work for the protection and well being of children through focusing on protecting the rights of the child, promoting a child-friendly society, promoting the status of the child in the actions of the future Council of Europe and through the development of a common agenda for children.

The importance of regional preparations for the forthcoming UN Special Session on Children cannot be over-emphasised. It is only through these that the perspectives and voices of all representatives will be heard and taken into account and ultimately, be incorporated in the new global agenda for children in the next decade.

CRIN would like to acknowledge contribution and support from Robert Cohen, communications officer for UNICEF – CEE/CIS and the Baltic States Region.

Photo: Antonia Reeve / Save the Children

91

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Breaking down the barriers.

There are a lot of benefits involved in preparing for the Special Session. Graeme Thompson discusses the learning curve experienced by PLAN International

PLAN International recognises the responsibility of NGOs and civil society to get involved in the Special Session on Children so as to support practical and urgent commitments to improvements in the lives of children and young people world-wide. Since most of PLAN's programmes directly touch on issues outlined in the World Summit Goals from 1990, PLAN has a keen and vested interest to participate in global decision-making that will affect children in the future.

As a grassroots organisation working in 100,000 communities in 58 countries around the world, PLAN's objectives for the preparatory meetings leading up to the Special Session are to bring the voices of children and their communities to the global forum. In so doing, PLAN hopes to ensure that important issues at the field level are taken into account by governments at the Special Session. PLAN also wants to influence the Outcome Document of the Special Session 'A World Fit for Children', which will inform children's development at national, regional and global levels in the coming decade.

PLAN believes that the participation of NGOs and children themselves in national, regional and global meetings is an important step forward in promoting better policies and programmes for children. The process behind the forthcoming Special Session has led the way in this respect. PLAN's involvement in the Special Session has been three-fold.

1. Representative participation at significant fora, including interaction through the Internet
2. Promotion of field-level experience at the global level and dissemination of global policy back to the field
3. Networking with partners and lobbying governments at home to influence child-focused development

PLAN is participating and facilitating NGO and civil society participation in a number of events related to the Special Session. To date these include two meetings of the Preparatory Committee of the Special Session and a range of regional meetings in Jamaica, Thailand, China, Kenya, Cairo, and Lusaka.

As previously mentioned, PLAN made a conscious decision to bring field-level staff and NGO partners, as well as children, to these meetings so that global policy work in New York would be taken back to the field. Children's participation was facilitated by both the Internet and their physical attendance at regional meetings. This is an important aspect of PLAN's work regarding the Special Session, since it aims to promote children's participation in development decision-making and children's self-expression, this being a key value of the organisation.

PLAN produced promotional materials built around the concept 'If I tell you, will you listen?' in order to bring children's perspectives and experiences of development into the process. Additionally, PLAN has also promised to share information and experiences from global fora with the field level. To date, PLAN has distributed materials from all the Preparatory Committee meetings, the latest including CDs in three languages with video-bites of government interventions and information about the Global Movement for Children, for children to listen to and act on.

Partnership has been another key to PLAN's successful experience at the Preparatory Committee meetings so far. Bringing field staff and NGO partners from all regions of the world to New York has strengthened relationships with partners, governments and other agencies in the field. Starting with its network of countries, and partner organisations, PLAN has supported colleague-organisations and local platforms to widen the Civil Society base and in so doing, has increased the commitment to children's rights and the Global Movement for Children. In addition, PLAN has proved its worth to other child-focused organisations as a committed long-term promoter of children's well-being, bringing ideas based on practical experiences at the grassroots level to the international debate on child rights.

PLAN has greatly benefited from participation in the Caucus meetings at the Preparatory Committee meetings, which were of particularly value to PLAN's regional representatives. PLAN has also been able to strengthen partnerships with many international agencies in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

In conclusion, it seems clear that while NGOs are playing increasing roles in community-based development, there are still many governments which do not recognise them as equal partners. Drawing from PLAN's experience, it would seem that the Special Session process has gone some way to breaking down these barriers, at least in Asia and Central America. However, much still remains to be done to bring governments and civil society actors together to forge a better future for the world's children.

Graeme Thompson is the public relations and communications co-ordinator at PLAN International for the Caribbean and Central America region.

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A decade fit for adolescents

Jessica Nott outlines the work of the International Planned Parenthood Federation to encourage greater attention on the sexual and reproductive health rights of children and young people in the Special Session.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is the world's largest voluntary organisation in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights. IPPF works globally to ensure that the sexual and reproductive health, choices and rights of men, women and young people are firmly placed on the international agenda. We are doing this through active involvement in preparations for the Special Session on Children and the Special Session on HIV/AIDS to be held in June 2001.

IPPF has also been involved in a number of other United Nations conferences including the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and their 5 year reviews.

For the Special Session on Children, IPPF is working hard to lobby for young people's sexual and reproductive health to be included in the final Outcome Document to be endorsed by heads of state in September. As supporters and implementers of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child we are active members of the Child Rights Caucus and will be inputting recommendations on sexual and reproductive health and rights through this body. IPPF colleagues participated at the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the Special Session in January 2001 and will continue to be part of this process. Many of our 139 member Family Planning Associations (FPAs) and our regional offices are involved in preparations for the Special Session. IPPF has been focusing on three main concerns.

1. Highlighting the sexual and reproductive health and rights issues affecting children and young people
2. Campaigning for greater recognition of adolescents in the Outcome Document
3. Ensuring the active participation of children in the consultative process

Photo: Leah Gordon / Save the Children

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Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

It is essential that the sexual and reproductive rights of children and young people, including their access to education and information, are recognised and acknowledged. IPPF, together with a coalition of other sexual and reproductive rights organisations, is campaigning to ensure that sexual and reproductive health issues are given due consideration in the Outcome Document.

IPPF calls on the Special Session to recognise the rights of all young people to:

1. comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and education to enable them to make informed choices;
2. accessible, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, including contraceptives;
3. participate in identifying their sexual and reproductive health needs, in making decisions and in influencing processes that affect their lives.

Adolescent Campaign

IPPF is spearheading a campaign to ensure that the needs of adolescents are not overlooked in the Outcome Document and discussions at the Special Session on Children. Unfortunately, the current version of the Outcome Document 'A World Fit for Children' for the Special Session does not do justice to the situation of more than one billion adolescents around the world.

Particularly worrying is the lack of an explicit goal focusing on adolescent development and health. Therefore there is nothing in the document that provides vision and legitimacy for overall policies and programmes with and for adolescents and young people.

The Participation of Children and Young People

IPPF's positive philosophy aims to empower young people and it is essential that children and young people are given the space, opportunities and support to enable them to participate in key decision-making. Since 1999, 20 percent of the members of IPPF's highest decision-making body, the Governing Council, have been young people under the age of 25 years. IPPF has created the impetus for a dynamic network of young people, working on sexual and reproductive health issues at the grassroots, to feed their views into policy decisions at the family planning association, regional and international level.

At the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the Special Session, IPPF were involved in facilitating the participation of children. Sadly, at that meeting the youth caucus became the battleground for extreme conservative and religious groups aiming to undermine the gains made at United Nations Conferences in the 1990s. Their objective was not only to attack the child rights agenda but also to discredit the process of children's participation in the meeting. It is crucial that IPPF together with key partners continues its efforts to ensure that children are able to meaningfully participate in the Special Session processes.

Nyantara Kakshapati is an active member of the family planning association of Nepal's youth group and is on IPPF's South Asia Regional Council as well as its Governing Council. As a member of the UNICEF Youth Advisory Group she had this to say about youth participation:

"It was encouraging to see children and young people milling the halls at the UN building and taking part in the on-going activities of the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the Special Session on Children. A handful of government delegations had children and young people on board - an inspiring beginning... Hopefully more (and eventually all!) governments will allow children and young people to participate as official delegates... Youthful idealism maybe, but what will become of this world without some hope?!"

Now we are working with partners including UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision and Peace Child International to ensure that effective children's participation is not only a key consideration in the Outcome Document but is also put into practice at the Special Session as it was at the third Preparatory Committee meeting in June. As well as consulting with our wide network of FPAs working in over 180 countries, we will be facilitating a consultation with young people on our interactive 'youth shakers' website managed by young people.

Jessica Nott is the assistant technical officer for Youth at the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

For further information visit www.ippf.org where you can sign up to support the IPPF youth manifesto (see www.ippf.org/youth/manifesto) and www.youthshakers.org

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Listening to young voices

Clare Feinstein discusses how the participation of children and young people is shaping the Special Session on Children.

"We make up 50 percent of the world's population and we deserve to be heard". This was the exhortation made by children and young people attending a preparatory workshop held in New York on 26 to 27 January 2001 before the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the Special Session on Children. Part of a wider message to the world community, it urges adults to listen to meaningful ideas from children about how to address children's rights.

This is a plea for a greater insight and acceptance of the vital role children and young people can (and do) play in shaping their futures and those of their communities and nations. It will undoubtedly be echoed in countries and regions around the world in the run-up to the Special Session.

In resolution 54/93 of the General Assembly, the participation of children and adolescents was recognised as being essential to the process leading up to the Special Session. UNICEF is currently working with a wide range of partners, including NGOs and young people, to identify the most effective and meaningful way for children and young people to participate in the process leading up to, and beyond, the Special Session. The emphasis is on the national and regional levels, which are closer to children and young people's everyday reality. Governments and NGOs are being encouraged to involve children and young people both in their review of the implementation of the goals of the World Summit for Children and as members of their delegations.

To ensure that the voices of children and young people are an integral part of both preparations for the Special Session and the conference itself, a diverse assortment of initiatives are planned at national, regional and international levels world-wide. These are directly linked to a continual process to promote children and young people's participation and an awareness of their rights around the world. The hope is that the Special Session will provide an impetus to long-term efforts to promote children's participation in decision-making processes and will make progress towards respecting children as equal citizens. Some of these consultations with children and young people are mapped out below.

A high-level regional meeting, hosted by the government of Nepal, was recently held between children and young people, corporate leaders and governments of South Asia. 'Change Makers for South Asia' focused on children and macroeconomics and engaged children's representatives from eight South Asian countries in a dialogue on investment in children with corporate leaders and Government Finance Planners.

In Zimbabwe, a Special Session report, based on research carried out by a group of children aged between 11-18 years, is being published to reflect the opinions of a wide variety of children from different backgrounds. It emphasises giving voice to more marginalised children who seldom have the opportunity to discuss issues that concern them.

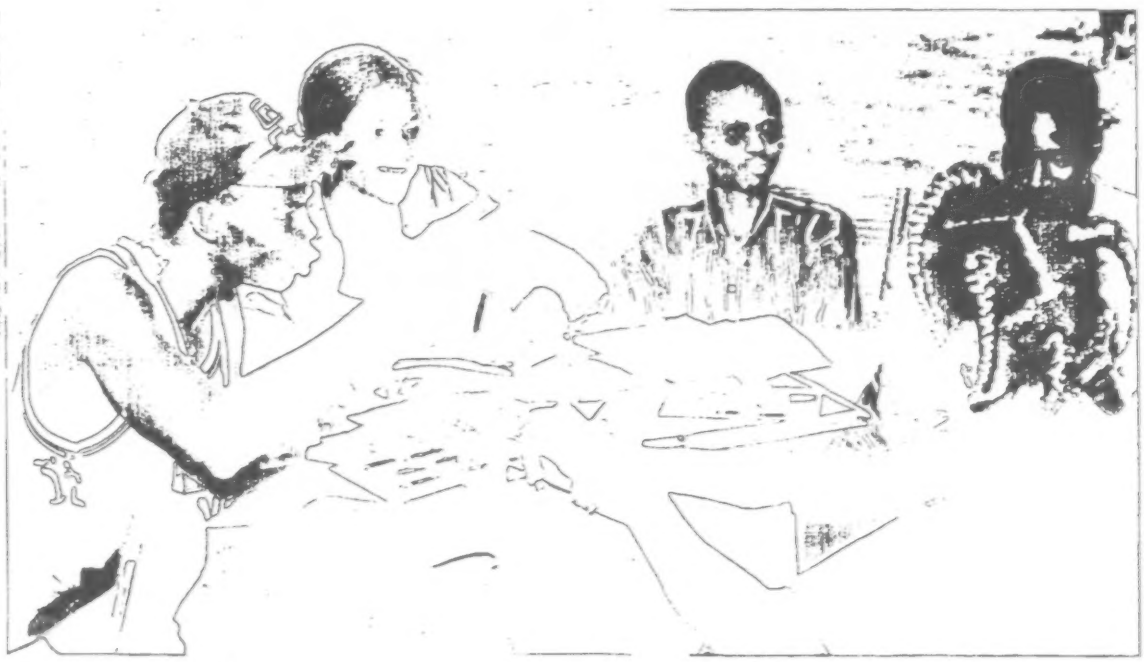

Photo: Neil Cooper and Jan Hammond / Save the Children

95

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In Canada, a nationwide consultation with children and young people is being organised via youth-led discussion groups, the results of which will be presented at the Special Session by the Canadian government. Again, this emphasises reaching out to marginal groups, such as minority children, children with disabilities, recent immigrants and children in care.

In Serbia, a series of complementary activities involving children and young people to identify their key issues is planned, including inter-city exchanges between secondary schools, workshops and a Children's Rights Festival 'Listen to Us!' which incorporates children's rights messages as defined by children and young people themselves.

In Nicaragua, extensive consultations have been held with adults, children and adolescents around the revised Outcome Document, 'A World Fit for Children'. Around 1,800 children and adolescents will have been involved in this consultation, which will culminate in national-level discussions to develop a national consensus regarding the Special Session on Children.

In Vietnam, children are engaging with decision-makers to enable them to develop a better understanding of the situation of nation's children.

At the international level, children and young people gathered in New York for the second Preparatory Committee meeting. Most were members of NGO delegations and they were a notable presence in the meeting. Their voices were heard in the formal proceedings and through participation in NGO caucuses and other events. They also had responsibilities as members of their NGO and government delegations.

However, the second Preparatory Committee meeting presented challenges regarding children and young people's participation and there are still many issues to address. Therefore, the following conditions are required to ensure the meaningful participation of children and young people at international events. It is important to:

- provide a comprehensive briefing of the issues for consideration in preparation for the situation children and young people are about to enter;
- provide information in a reader and child-friendly format;
- make translation available at all times;
- provide financial and practical support to facilitate their attendance at meetings; and,
- create space where children and young people can share and exchange experiences and information.

Photo: Howard Davies / Save the Children

At international meetings, the adult participants should accord child and youth delegates the same status and respect they expect themselves. Adults play a key role in both informing young delegates how to participate and ensuring that their participation is fully supported.

The importance of children's participation – the fact that their perspectives are a valuable resource that enriches discussions and decision-making at all levels – is by no means universally accepted. Only when it is finally recognised that children and young people are valuable partners in our common search for action-oriented goals, will our shared commitment to making a real, positive and lasting impact on the lives of children become a reality.

Clare Feinstein is the participation co-ordinator for the Special Session at the International Save the Children Alliance.

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Publications

Further documents and resources relating to the Special Session can be found at: www.crin.org/specialsession and www.unicef.org/specialsession

Key Documents for the UN Special Session on Children

UNICEF (May 2001), 'We the Children' - end-decade review of follow-up to the World Summit for Children - Unedited Advance Copy, UNICEF
From the Internet: www.unicef.org/specialsession/review.htm

UNICEF (May 2001) Second Revised Draft Outcome Document 'A World Fit for Children' UNICEF. From the Internet: www.unicef.org/specialsession/draftoutcome-rev2-16may.pdf

The Child Rights Caucus (May 2001) 'A World Fit for Children' – Alternative Text prepared by the Child Rights Caucus for Third Substantive Session of The Preparatory Committee for The Special Session UN General Assembly on Children 11-15 June 2001 (May 2001), Child Rights Caucus.
From the Internet:
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/Alt_txt_May22_01.pdf

The Child Rights Caucus (October 2000) 'Child Rights Agenda for the Coming Decade' Statement of the Child Rights Caucus for the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children.
From the Internet:
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/child_rights_agenda.pdf

Save the Children UK (April 2001) 'A World Fit for Children' - Child-friendly Version of Revised Draft OutcomeDocument.
From the Internet:
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/may17cfd.pdf

Regional Consultation Documents for the UN Special Session on Children

A Region Fit for Children. – Civil society organisations' vision for children in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltics Region. Global Movement for Children – text from the Regional Consultation of Civil Society Organisations held in Bucharest, Romania, 8-10 April 2001. From the Internet:
www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=1667

'A World Fit for and by Children' - Our point of view as African working children, African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY).
From the Internet: www.enda.sn/eja/amwcyonungass.htm

NGOs comments on the Issues Paper 'A Region Fit For Children' – Vision of the Movement in the Interests of Children. Save the Children Tajikistan and UNICEF Tajikistan (2001)

Documento de Kingston - documento elaborado por los adolescentes y jovenes participantes de la V Reunión

Ministerial en Kingston Latin America and Caribbean Caucus for the 2001 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (2001)
From the Internet:
www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=1584

Posición del Caucus Regional de América Latina y El Caribe en relación al documento final provisionel. Un mundo apropiado para la Infancia. (Febrero 2001). Latin America and Caribbean Caucus for the 2001 UN General Assembly Special
From the Internet:
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/document del caucus.pdf

Propuesta de las organizaciones no gubernamentales a la agenda futura en el marco de la V reunión ministerial sobre niñas y politica social en las americas (2001)
Latin America and Caribbean Caucus for the 2001 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. From the Internet:
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/propuesta_ONGS.pdf

Background Documents to the UN Special Session on Children

Statement at the Second Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (30th January 2001) presented by Dr. Paulinus L.N. Sikosana, Head of Delegation for Zimbabwe
From the Internet:
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/session2_Zimbabwe.pdf

Statement at the Second Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (30th January 2001) presented by Mrs Veena S. Rao, Joint Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India.
From the Internet:
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/session2_India.pdf

Statement at the Second Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (30th January 2001). Intervention by the Pakistan Delegation.
From the Internet:
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/session2_Pakistan.pdf

UNICEF (April 2001) Newsletter on the UN Special Session on Children
From the Internet:
www.unicef.org/specialsession/Newsletter_No1_ENGL.pdf

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Children and Armed Conflict Caucus (January 2001) Oral Statement at Second PrepCom from Children and Armed Conflict Caucus
From the Internet:
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/children_armed_conflict_statement.pdf

Background Documents available from www.unicef.org/specialsession

Convention on the Rights of the Child - Resolution 44/25 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 September 1989 (A/RES/44/25)

World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action: World Summit for Children, 30 September 1990

Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, Resolution 54/93 adopted by the General Assembly on 7 December 1999 (A/RES/54/93, dated 17 December 1999)

Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly on 25 May 2000, in Resolution 54/263: Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict; Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

Membership form

Please photocopy and return to CRIN

Name of organisation

Acronym/abbreviation | Year established

English translation of name of organisation

Name of director

Name of main CRIN contact in your organisation

Postal address (include country)

Tel (include country codes) | Fax (include country codes)

Email | Website

Number of staff

Languages used

Does your organisation have capacity to receive email regularly?

Does your organisation have capacity to visit websites regularly?

Number of CRIN Newsletters required in English, French and/or Spanish

Please give a short description of your organisation's aims and activities
(please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

List countries in which your organisation works
(please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

Please tick the appropriate box

How do you describe your organisation?
- ☐ Non governmental organisation (NGO)
- ☐ United Nations agency
- ☐ Community based organisation
- ☐ Research institute
- ☐ International organisation
- ☐ Governmental organisation

Does your organisation?
- ☐ Work directly with children
- ☐ Lobby governments and the United Nations
- ☐ Work in partnership with other organisations
- ☐ Provide training on children's rights
- ☐ Provide funding to other organisations
- ☐ Undertake research on children's rights
- ☐ Work with the media and press
- ☐ Undertake legal casework on behalf of children

Which age group does your organisation target?
☐ Children 0-4 ☐ Children 5-15 ☐ Children 16-18

Does your organisation have expertise in any of the following themes?
- ☐ Children in care, fostering and adoption
- ☐ Children living with HIV/AIDS
- ☐ Child labour and working children
- ☐ Individual cases of violations
- ☐ Children in armed conflict
- ☐ Children in conflict with the law
- ☐ Reporting and monitoring on the CRC
- ☐ Children and the media
- ☐ Children with disabilities
- ☐ Participation of children in decision making
- ☐ Children and education
- ☐ Refugee and unaccompanied children
- ☐ Environment and habitat
- ☐ Sexual exploitation of children
- ☐ Children and health
- ☐ Children working and living on the street

Signature | Date

Please return this completed form along with any relevant publications, newsletters, annual reports and brochures to:
Child Rights Information Network, c/o Save the Children, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, UK
Tel +44.(0)20.7716.2400 Fax +44.(0)20.7793.7628 Email info@crin.org

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Child Rights Information Network

Joining CRIN is free. CRIN's membership policy requires that you: (1) work for an organisation that supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; (2) are involved in child rights activities; (3) are committed to sharing information. CRIN is an open network of members and therefore holds no official status beyond that of its member organisations. CRIN is unable to accredit any member organisation or provide funding for its members unless funding is directly related to one of CRIN's projects approved by CRIN's management team.

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Calender of Events

Events for June – December 2001

June 20 to 24, 2001

6th International Conference for Health and Human Rights
Cavtat, Croatia
Ksenija Kontak, Organising Committee, Society for Psychological Assistance, Prilaz Gjure Dezelica 27, 1000 Zagreb, Croatia
T +385 1 48 26 111/ 112 F +385 1 48 26 113
E organiz@ishhr-conf-2001.org

June 25 to 27, 2001

UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS
New York, USA
UNAIDS, 20 Avenue Appia, Switzerland
T +41 22 791 4461 F +41 22 791 4165
E pascale@un.org

June 28 to 30, 2001

IV Child and Family Policy Conference - Children and Young People: Their Environments
Dundedin, New Zealand
Children's Issues Centre, University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand
T +64 3479 5038 F +64 3479 5039
E cic@otago.ac.nz or karen.nairn@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

July 15 to 20, 2001

OAU Summit - Children in Armed Conflict
Lusaka, Zambia
T +1 212 326 7000 E netmaster@unicef.org
W www.unicef.org

August 1 to 2, 2001

National Meeting with Children and Government Delegates
Vietnam
Save the Children Sweden - Vietnam Office, 6 Ton That Thiep, Vietnam
T +84 4 8232393/4112 F +84 4 8232394
E rbhanoi@netnam.org.vn

August 18 to 22, 2001

Second International Conference on Children's Rights in Education: Creating a Culture of Human Rights, Democracy and Peace in the New Millennium
Victoria, Canada
Natasha Blanchet-Cohen, Coordinator, Child Rights Education - International, Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria, B.C. Canada, V8W 2Y2
T +1 317 274 6805 F +1 317 274 6864
E credintl@iupui.edu

August 24 to 27, 2001

ISPCAN VIII European Regional Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect
Istanbul, Turkey
The Turkish Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
Contact: Professor Dr. Esin Konanc, Chairperson, Local Organising Committee
T +90 212 230 00 00 F +90 212 248 40 30
E magister_pco@turk.net
W www.ispcan2001-istanbul.com

Or contact:
International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
Suite 500, 200 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago IL 60601, USA
T +1 312 578 1401 F +1 312 578 1404
E ispcan@aol.com W www.ispcan.org

August 31 to 7 September 2001

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance
South Africa
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR-UNOG, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
T +41-22 917-9000 F +41-22 917-9016
W www.unhchr.ch

September 19 to 21, 2001

United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children
New York, USA
Secretariat for the Special Session on Children, UNICEF House, 3 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
T + 212-963-4475 F 212-963-0071
E inquiries@un.org W www.un.org or www.unicef.org/specialsession

24 September to 12 October 2001

28th Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child,
Geneva, Switzerland
State party reports being considered: Cameroon, Cape Verde, Gambia, Kenya, Mauritania, Qatar, Paraguay, Portugal, Uzbekistan.
Secretariat for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais Des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
T +41 22 917 9301; F + 41 22 917 9022
E pdavid.hchr@unog.ch
W www.unhchr.ch

28 September 2001

Day of General Discussion: Violence against Children in the Family and in Schools
UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - Committee on the Rights of the Child, OHCHR-UNOG, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
T +41-22 917-9000 F +41-22 917-9016
W www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/crcdod1.htm

October 1 to 2, 2001

Second World Conference on Family Violence, National Council for Child Abuse and Family Violence
Prague, Czech Republic
National Council on Child Abuse & Family Violence (NCCAFV), 1155 Connecticut Avenue NW, Fourth Floor, Washington, DC 20036, USA
T +1 202 429 6696 F +1 831 655 3930
E nccafv@aol.com

October 5 to 10, 2001

6th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific,
Melbourne, Australia
Contact: Secretariat, c/o ICMS Pty Ltd, 84 Queensbridge Street, Southbank, Victoria 3006, Australia
T +61 3 9682 0244 F +611 3 9682 0288
E 6icaap@icms.com.au
W www.icms.com.au/6icaap

October 23 to 25, 2001

Second Annual TACR RMT, UNICEF
Panama
UNICEF, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
T +1 212 326 7000
E netmaster@unicef.org W www.unicef.org

October 23 to 25, 2001

Child Labour in South Asia,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Event Organiser: Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development and Amsterdam Foundation for International Research on Working Children
Contact: Anthr-Soc Centre, University of Amsterdam, Oudezijdsachterburgwal 185, 1012 DK Amsterdam, The Netherlands

November 21 to 24 2001

XI^th^ Ibero-American Summit of Presidents and Heads of State
UNICEF, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
T +1 212 326 7000
E netmaster@unicef.org W www.unicef.org

December 17- 20 2001

Second World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
Yokohama, Japan
UNICEF; The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ECPAT.
Contact: NGO Forum for Combating Sexual Exploitation
E info@focalpointngo.org or ecpatbkk@ksc15th.com
W www.focalpointngo.org/Global/English/2wc.htm

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Information

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a membership-driven organisation and network of more than 1,100 child rights organisations around the world. It strives to improve the lives of children through the exchange of information about child rights and the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A website
Updated regularly, the website, which is a leading resource on child rights issues, contains references to hundreds of publications, recent news and forthcoming events as well as details of organisations working worldwide for children. The site also includes reports submitted by NGOs to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

An email service
Distributed more than twice a week, CRINMAIL provides regular news bulletins about child rights issues, as well as information about new publications and forthcoming events.

A newsletter
Published three times per year, the newsletter is a thematic publication that examines a specific issue affecting children. It also summarises news, events, campaigns and publications.

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Previous issues

CRIN Newsletter 13, November 2000:
Children and Macroeconomics

101

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CRIN

Child Rights Information Network Number 15 / March 2002

Mainstreaming child rights

Centre of attention *Marta Santos Pais on the children's rights agenda*

NGOs and Special Rapporteurs *Jean-Nicolas Beuze on mutual support*

Doing the business for children's rights *Fairouz El-Tom on commerce's role*

ED UCATION

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a membership-driven organisation and network of over 1,200 child rights organisations around the world. It strives to improve the lives of children through the exchange of information about child rights and the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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CRIN Newsletter Number 15

Mainstreaming Child Rights

3 **Editorial**

4 News round-up

6 **Follow-up on the Special Session on Children**

6 On a learning curve at the UN – interview with a young participant, Krishna Thapa

7 Raising the profile of Latin America's young people by Jorge Freyre

9 **Mainstreaming Child Rights**

9 Centre of attention by Marta Santos Pais

13 Factfile: Definitions of mainstreaming

14 Rapporteurs reach out to children by Jean-Nicolas Beuze

16 View from the front line by Kathy Vandergrift

18 Making headway in the mainstream by Denise Allen

20 Closer contacts offer a golden campaigning opportunity by Ahmed Motala

22 Tackling violence against children by Helena Gezelius, Melanie Gow and Roberta Cecchetti

24 Doing the business for children's rights by Fairouz El-Tom

25 Factfile: The Child Rights Advocacy Project

26 Bringing the Charter to Africa's children by Wambui Njuguna

28 **Publications**

28 Thematic publications mainstreaming child rights

29 New publications child rights

30 **Membership form**

31 **Calendar of events**

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Photo: Marc French/Panos Pictures

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Editorial

This edition of the CRIN Newsletter considers how to take forward the 'mainstreaming' of child rights and illustrates this process through a selection of case studies. This covers the ways in which child rights issues are integrated into the work not only of child focused bodies (such as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child), but of a much wider range of institutions such as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights), the UN Security Council, corporate businesses and other bodies.

Although there are many definitions of 'mainstreaming', generally mainstreaming child rights has been used recently to describe a range of activities and a process that are aimed at bringing child rights in from the margins and into the mainstream.

A good example of such mainstreaming is the work carried out at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in Geneva. The mandate of this body includes monitoring compliance with existing international standards, developing new standards and investigating violations. The NGO child rights community has invested much effort in this annual meeting in recent years through organising a Children's Rights Caucus, lobbying on the text of the Omnibus Resolution on the Rights of the Child and mainstreaming child rights within other resolutions of the CHR. CRIN is working to support this work through information sharing on the work of this caucus.

Marta Santos Pais opens the thematic articles on this issue by offering her view of mainstreaming as an 'incremental process'. She outlines two major challenges critical to success in moving the child rights agenda forward: 'promoting the rights of the child as a distinct and relevant concern; and ensuring the steady operationalisation of child rights at the national and international levels, in human rights activities and in the agendas for development, humanitarian aid, peace and security.'

The process of mainstreaming child rights, Pais says, pre-dates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Her overview weaves together a picture that includes key moments in child rights, such as the International Year of the Child, the Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, as well as clear changes to the organisational mandate of UNICEF and the UN Secretary General's Programme of Reform.

Two authors then look at child rights within the Commission on Human Rights and its special extra-conventional mechanisms. Ahmed Motala shows how advocacy on children's rights at the CHR will stand to be improved now that a children's rights caucus has year-round support from NGOs. Jean-Nicolas Beuze outlines how the new Special Rapporteur on Torture (who took over in December 2001) will continue to monitor situations on children and welcomes the support of child rights NGOs.

Others go on to look at the larger UN system. Within the Security Council three resolutions on children and armed conflict have cleared the way for an ongoing debate linking international peace and security to child rights.

Lobbying in order to ensure monitoring and implementation of existing international human rights standards can also ensure a mainstreaming process. We examine the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an NGO alliance, which has worked since 1983 to organise advocacy work on the UNCRC both nationally and internationally. In Africa a similar effort has started to support implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and information on this is featured in a short article on this subject.

Another of our contributors then goes on to ask: can international human rights law be applied not only to states but also to private bodies? How can business help to fulfil children's rights?

This issue closes with consideration of the issue of violence against children. The UN General Assembly has now agreed to a recommendation from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that there should be an in-depth international study on violence against children.

Changing circumstances since 11 September have meant that there are now greater challenges to ensuring the rights of children are respected. The United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children to be held in May and its outcome document, 'A World Fit for Children', must ensure that children enjoy their right to education, health and protection and live in an environment of global stability and peace. Mainstreaming children's rights into the activities and priorities of many other bodies however will also be a key part of this process.

Andrea Khan

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News round-up

Yokohama Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

The Second World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children drew to a close on 20 December 2001. Governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, young people and others engaged in combating the global trade in child sex came together to share experiences, learn from each other and plan future actions. The Second World Congress concluded with the Yokohama Global Commitment, reaffirming and reinforcing promises made at the first World Congress held in Stockholm in 1996.

Reflecting on the outcomes of six regional preparatory meetings, over 3,000 participants in Yokohama declared "the protection and promotion of the interests and rights of the child to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation" to be their primary consideration. This paved the way for reinforced action against such rights violations as trafficking, genital mutilation, early marriage, sexual abuse as a weapon of war, and abuse in the home. The Yokohama Global Commitment calls for early ratification of international instruments that relate to the sexual exploitation of children and for a reinforcement of efforts to address the root causes that put children at risk of exploitation, including poverty, inequality, discrimination, persecution, violence, armed conflict, HIV/AIDS, dysfunctional families and criminality.

Source: Adapted from the closing press release from UNICEF, ECPAT International and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Yokohama Japan, 17 December 2001

Small arms conference adopts action programme

The UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which took place in New York from 9 to 20 July 2001, concluded with the universal adoption of a programme of action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit arms trade. Its measures include particular reference to addressing the special needs of children affected by armed conflict and recognition of the fundamental right of people, particularly women and children, not to be gunned down in cold blood by weapons used in the world's battlefields. As for follow-up to the conference, it was recommended that the General Assembly convene a meeting to review progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action no later than 2006. The date and venue will be decided at the 58th session of the General Assembly.

Source: United Nations, press release DC/2795, 21 July 2001
www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/DC2795.doc.htm

United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS

A Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, Global Crisis – Global Action, was adopted at the conclusion of the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (June 2001). The declaration noted that people in developing countries are the most affected, particularly women, young adults and children, especially girls. The declaration's provisions include the implementation of strategies to strengthen community-based care and healthcare systems and the provision of increased support to those affected by HIV/AIDS. Particular focus was put on reducing the vulnerability of children and young people by ensuring their access to primary and secondary education, expanding good quality youth-friendly information and strengthening reproductive and sexual health programmes. The declaration made specific commitments to the many orphans who have lost their families through HIV/AIDS.

Source: Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS 'Global Crisis – Global Action'
www.un.org/ga/ads/coverage/FinalDeclarationHIVAIDS.html

World Summit on Sustainable Development

The international community has moved one step closer towards engaging governments, business and civil society in delivering action to promote economic growth and social development while protecting the environment. Key topics to be addressed at the world summit include poverty eradication, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, sustainable management of natural resources and the need to make globalisation promote sustainable development. The summit, taking place in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26 August to 4 September 2002, encourages broad participation, regarding this as central to sustainable development. All sectors of society have a role to play to protect global resources and the conference will see active participation by representatives from business and industry, children and youth, farmers, indigenous people, local authorities, non-governmental

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organisations, scientific and technological communities, women and workers and trade unions, in addition to government.

Source: United Nations, www.johannesburgsummit.org

SAARC conventions for children

On 5 January 2002, two important conventions on the trafficking of women and children and child welfare were signed by seven South Asian nations. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, The Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka signed the conventions at a summit in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia reaffirms adherence by Member States to the Declaration of the World Summit for Children and their commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It recognises the efforts of SAARC towards building a regional consensus on priorities, strategies and approaches to meet the changing needs of children, as embodied in the Rawalpindi Resolution on Children of South Asia 1996, and notes the significant progress already made by the Member States in the field of child survival and welfare. It also takes into account the declaration of the years 2001–2010 as the 'SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child'.

The Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution promotes co-operation among Member States to effectively deal with various aspects of prevention, interdiction and suppression of trafficking in women and children; repatriation and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking and preventing the use of women and children in international prostitution networks, particularly where the SAARC member countries are the countries of origin, transit and destination.

Source: Save the Children UK – Nepal Office, SAARC and CRIN

Spotlight on the private sector

The private sector as service provider and its role in implementing child rights is the theme for the next general discussion day of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. This will take place on 20 September 2002 during the 31st session of the Committee at the United Nations Office in Geneva.

The focus is on the impact of the increasing participation of private sector actors in the provision and funding of traditional state functions, and also to outline issues that arise from the privatisation of services. Different types of partnerships will be examined in order to assess positive and negative impacts on the realisation of children's rights. The legal obligations of States Parties in the context of privatisation needs to be explored, and this includes ensuring equal access that is affordable, and quality services that are sustainable. Governance issues (including accountability, transparency and independence) that arise from the involvement of the private sector in service provision will also be assessed. Finally, the Committee would like to look at best practices and to identify possible models for States Parties.

The purpose of such general discussions is to foster a deeper understanding of the contents and implications of the UNCRC in relation to specific topics. The discussions are public. Government representatives, United Nations human rights mechanisms, as well as United Nations bodies and specialised agencies, non-governmental organisations and individual experts are invited to take part. NGOs are invited to submit written contributions to the Office of the High Commissioner as soon as possible, and before 28 June 2002. Please direct enquiries to the NGO Group (NGO-CRC@tiscalineti.ch).

Source: NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/crcdod4.htm

Optional protocols come into force

The two Optional Protocols to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child came into force early in 2002. The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography did so on 18 January 2002, while the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict came into effect on 12 February 2002. Both mark important commitments by states for further protection of children's rights in these areas.

The status of ratifications on both Optional Protocols can be viewed on the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights' website.

Source: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, www.unchr.ch

On a learning curve at the UN

In a follow-up to the last CRIN Newsletter on the Special Session on Children, we talk to 16 year-old Krishna, a youth participant at the Third PrepCom of the Special Session.

Krishna Thapa, 16, from Nepal attended his first United Nations meeting in June 2001, taking part in the Third PrepCom for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. Krishna was elected to attend by other young people in his country, all of whom were part of the Change Makers' Initiative. This scheme brought together children and young people with key corporate leaders and government planners in South Asia so the two sides could discuss what should be done for the region's children over the next decade. In an interview by Save the Children Nepal, Krishna describes what it was like for him to be at the UN and how it measured up to his expectations.

Anil: As someone closely involved in the Change Makers' Initiative, what was the most important thing to come out of the Third PrepCom?

Krishna: I learned about issues that the Change Makers should be aware of, as well as what has actually been done for children at the moment. Knowing these facts will help us when we lobby the government to do more for children's welfare. What I learned at the conference will help all of us in the scheme to teach other children and their parents about rights. We will also be able to go to businesses and tell them about young people's rights and why they need to get involved too so that children can achieve their rights.

Anil: Do you think that the Third PrepCom and the Special Session process will help create a better world for children?

Krishna: Yes, they will help develop an agenda for all children and the ways we go about making that happen. The best interests of children were discussed throughout the Third PrepCom. Most importantly for me, many provisions concerning the best interests of Nepali children – ones that had been left out earlier – have now been included in our submission to the PrepCom.

In Nepal young people are taking an active part in the Say Yes for Children campaign. Both the Third PrepCom and the Special Session process will definitely help provide a proper agenda for children in Nepal.

Anil: What were your expectations of the Third PrepCom process and were they realised?

Krishna: I expected to learn about problems involving children in other countries, as well as how children could be a part of solving those problems. I also expected to learn about ways to improve children's welfare in the future. Some of my expectations were met, but not all.

Anil: What was the most exciting event there and why?

Krishna: On the second day I spoke during a group session. I suggested collective action was the best way to get results and both separate and that specialist groups working on children's welfare should co-operate. My suggestion went to the top of the list of recommendations that emerged from the session.

Anil: What is the most useful thing that you learned from your visit?

Krishna: Before going I thought that all the programmes meant for children would be interesting and that children would be encouraged to share their thoughts. I realised when I got there that was not going to be the case.

Although the programmes were meant for children, only the adults spoke. There were times when it seemed as if the children were only there as ornamental exhibits.

Anil: Having experienced a session, how do you think it can be improved?

Krishna: Several ways come to mind. More than two young people from each country should be allowed to attend. When children can't express themselves clearly, they should be supported so they can do so, which will help them to get their points across. At the moment if they can't express themselves clearly they risk their views being rejected outright. In programmes that are especially convened for children, the situation should be made child-friendly so they feel relaxed and confident. And opportunities for them to have a proper say and be truly involved in the proceedings should be in place.

Krishna was interviewed by Anil Raghuvanshi, Co-ordinator of the Global Movement for Children and UNGASS, Save the Children UK, Jawalakehl, GPO Box 992, Kathmandu, Nepal. He also translated the article and can be contacted by email at a.raghuvanshi@sc-uk.org.np or telephone: 00 977 1 535159.

For further information on child and youth participation in the Special Session process, please visit the following websites:
Global Movement for Children Nepal: www.gmc.org.np or
UNICEF: www.unicef.org/specialsession/under-18.

109 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Raising the profile of Latin America's young people

The Latin American and Caribbean Caucus for the UN Special Session on Children has opened up new ways of working, Jorge Freyre explains.

As part of the build-up to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, a variety of regional and thematic groups emerged at preparatory meetings in New York. These groups or caucuses comprised alliances of organisations from civil society working together to advocate for a common cause: the recognition and full implementation of children's human rights as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Latin American and Caribbean Caucus was established to ensure that the realities faced by the children of the region would be taken into account in the negotiations, and that provisions for them would be included in the final outcome document of the Special Session entitled A World Fit for Children.

From the outset, one of the major challenges for this regional caucus was establishing clear methods of communication so that national and regional level activities could be co-ordinated across the region.

The Special Session process supported the development of new relationships and ways of working. Historically, NGOs have not engaged with governmental organisations at a regional level and the Special Session negotiations were the first such interaction. This new relationship saw civil society developing its capacity to promote children's issues to governments directly, while at the same time, government officials recognised the important contribution of NGOs' work with children. They recognised that NGOs could play an important role regarding both the analysis of children's needs and the provision of information, which had important implications for regional and international government documentation.

This led to various national-level activities taking place within the region for children, and in turn to a series of regional meetings to exchange information and develop a combined regional position for the Special Session.

Through these meetings, civil society actors and young people were able to contribute ideas and issues, prepared in a single regional outcome document which was then presented in negotiations with other regions.

The regular exchange of experiences helped to identify a focus for the work of the Latin American Caucus, which then was better placed to follow the progress made regarding their input and submissions to the outcome, A World Fit for Children. The meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session were important, and attending enabled the caucus to develop a close relationship with other regional and thematic caucuses established for the Special Session (for example, the Child Rights Caucus, the Linkage Caucus). Through this, governmental negotiations on A World Fit for Children were closely followed and a clear position was developed between the NGOs. Their participation in the Child Rights Caucus, an active alliance of NGOs advocating for increased reference to the UNCRC and child rights in the final text of A World Fit for Children, provided an important link to others advocating for child rights across several sectors, contexts and areas. It also clarified the regional responsibility of the Latin American Caucus with regards to ensuring that the needs of the children in its region were represented in the process. Involvement in regional preparations and attending the meetings of the Preparatory Committee of the Special Session has helped the Latin American Caucus develop common criteria and define regional priorities for children, with the UNCRC as the framework for all activities relating to children.

The process has been innovative in that it has developed a model of active participation from a broad range of actors, be they from government or civil society, or children and young adults themselves, in order to assure the success of the goals of the caucus. Despite the tragic events of 11 September which led to the Special Session being postponed to May 2002, the Latin American Caucus continued to support input from the region through a variety of activities including national and regional events, support for youth participation and spreading the message about child rights and the importance of the Special Session across the region. It is hoped that this experience will have truly placed the rights of the children of Latin America and the Caribbean on the international agenda.

Jorge Freyre is director of Gurises Unidos, co-ordinator of the Latin American and Caribbean Caucus and Uruguayan NGO National Net's delegate for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children.

Photo: Jenny Matthews

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Child Rights Information Network(CRIN)
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Centre of attention

Marta Santos Pais describes how children's rights have moved up the international agenda.

The process of child rights mainstreaming has come to the fore in recent years, creating a unique opportunity to place children's rights at the heart of national and international agendas. The process has also made a strong contribution to the growing recognition of human rights worldwide, as the foundation for social progress, peace and security.

The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been a crucial turning point. Its near-universal ratification and its steady implementation has stimulated reflection, dialogue and action on children's rights by an increasing number of institutions and mechanisms, within and beyond the UN system and its human rights machinery. A tangible process of change has taken place within countries – a unique illustration of the translation of a normative framework into concrete policies and actions, and of bridging human rights standards with operational activities.

But the process of mainstreaming child rights pre-dates even the UNCRC. The International Year of the Child, 1979, was instrumental in giving visibility to children's issues and in calling on national institutions to prioritise and strategise on these issues.

The momentum gathered around the International Year of the Child and the social mobilisation for children that it created led to the drafting of the UNCRC. The process itself was innovative and differed from every previous process to set an international standard. Governmental experts from a wide range of sectors took part, together with representatives from United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations.

Reaffirming the indivisibility of human rights and calling for a holistic approach to the child as a subject of rights, the multidisciplinary nature of the UNCRC became apparent very rapidly. Key requirements for the successful realisation of the rights of the child have evolved. These include the need for concerted action both across government departments and in association with national institutions; including the parliament and judiciary; the genuine participation of civil society; and, the support of relevant, international organisations, particularly within the UN system. The 1990 World Summit for Children, held just after the UNCRC's entry into force, followed a similar approach and identified progress for children as a key goal of overall national development and an integral part of the broader international development strategy.

Even at this early stage of UNCRC implementation, child rights mainstreaming was perceived as instrumental. And two major challenges were identified.

- The human rights of children are relevant to many sectors, going beyond the traditional areas of child welfare. All of these sectors need to be engaged for child rights.
- Safeguarding these rights will only be a reality when all relevant actors are involved, both governmental and non-governmental, at national and international levels.

There have been many achievements in the national implementation process of the UNCRC since the early 1990s. The mobilisation around children's rights has generated legislative reform processes and informed constitutional reviews in many countries.

National action plans have been developed to ensure that children's concerns were included in the national political and development agenda. Co-ordinating mechanisms have been created, sometimes with wide representation of public authorities and non-governmental organisations.

An increasing number of independent institutions to protect children's rights have been developed (eg, Ombudsoffices for children). National and regional coalitions of NGOs have been formed, gathering the most relevant groups that are active in the most relevant children's areas in a converging campaign behind the UNCRC. In some cases, parliaments have established committees to consider their mandates in the light of children's rights – including the adoption of legislation and approval of the budget. Professional associations have reflected the principles of the UNCRC in their own codes of conduct as a reference for their work.

Moreover, the call made by Article 45 of the UNCRC for a process of international co-operation and solidarity to advance the cause of children's rights moved this process further forward. From an early stage, UN organisations were associated with the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and encouraged to follow-up its recommendations to foster UNCRC implementation at the national level. This, in turn, led UNICEF to commit to the realisation of the rights of the child in its mission statement and to promote the operationalisation of the UNCRC throughout its activities. The mission statement was approved by the UNICEF Executive

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Board in 1996, the guidelines for human rights programming were approved in 1998 and the programme policy and procedure manual was issued in 2000.

Within other UN organisations, the process led to a growing consideration for children's rights in their internal agendas – as illustrated so clearly by the International Labour Organisation standards in the area of child labour and the UNHCR guidelines for refugee children. A similar process took place in the non-governmental world, which was, from the very beginning, actively engaged in the implementation of the UNCRC and involved in its monitoring process.

As the mainstreaming process widens, so the rights of children gain more attention in the national agenda. This is vital because, despite the undeniable achievements made for children over the last decade, much remains to be done. The weak impact of the rights of the child on budgetary processes is just one example of how far we still have to go before children's rights are recognised as a distinct and important concern. Children's rights remain, in many cases, an afterthought, or are seen as a parallel, rather than central, issues. They are seen as ethical values that are difficult to put into practice or, worst of all, as simply irrelevant. This is certainly an indication of how crucial it is to pursue and consolidate the process made so far.

This initial phase of the implementation of the UNCRC coincided with the reinforcement of the human rights machinery in the area of children's rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child was established by the UNCRC itself to monitor progress on its implementation. A Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was created by the Commission on Human Rights in 1990, to promote respect for relevant international standards and prevent the violation of children's rights in areas covered by its mandate. Meanwhile, the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery of the Sub-Commission, presently known as the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, generated two important programmes of action to prevent the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography, and for the elimination of the exploitation of child labour. These had a clear impact on the agenda of the Commission on Human Rights and the resolutions adopted.

The timely convergence of these mechanisms were critical to promote the consideration of children's rights as a clear and distinct area of work and to move the child rights agenda forward. But at that time, the rights of the child were perceived as of relevance chiefly to these mechanisms and were not envisaged as a cross-cutting theme that others should also take on board.

Human rights treaties and treaty-based bodies

Beyond the UNCRC, every human rights treaty is relevant to children. In some cases, they include specific provisions on the human rights of children, as in the two Covenants on human rights. Therefore, the mandates of the Committees established to monitor implementation of such conventions (often referred to as 'treaty-based mechanisms' or 'treaty-monitoring bodies') also include the rights of the child. General Comments adopted by treaty bodies to interpret treaty provisions are important illustrations of this approach. To enhance the mainstreaming of children's rights in the work of treaty monitoring bodies, a close collaboration was established between the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other committees and pursued in the framework of the annual meeting of chairpersons of treaty bodies.

World conferences

Beyond the World Summit for Children, the first to focus solely on children, every UN Conference in the last decade has addressed the situation of children and expressed a strong commitment to child rights in its deliberations. In some cases, as in the Platform for Action agreed at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, a special section was included on the specific realities faced by children. In this mainstreaming effort, the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, was an important moment. On the one hand, the conference called on all States to integrate the UNCRC into their National Action Plans. On the other, it made a strong call for the promotion of children's rights within the UN system, recognising that the human rights of children constitute a priority for system-wide action by the UN. It recommended that matters relating to human rights and the situation of children be regularly reviewed and monitored by all relevant organs and mechanisms of the UN system and by the supervisory bodies of the specialised agencies in accordance with their mandates.

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Human rights mechanisms

The relevance of child rights gained increasing visibility over the decade within the UN human rights system. The human rights mechanisms set up by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), for example, Special Rapporteurs, Special Representatives and working groups, both with country or thematic mandates, paid increasing attention to the protection of children's rights in the context of their mandates and reports. This included, for example, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the former Yugoslavia. Moreover, as a result of the Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, a Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict was appointed in 1997.

This trend in the work of the CHR has grown in recent years, as indicated by the Omnibus Resolution of the CHR on the Rights of the Child and recent reports of Special Rapporteurs (for example, the country rapporteurs on Cambodia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and thematic Rapporteurs on the Right to Housing and the Right to Education). But in other parts of the UN machinery, child rights mainstreaming remains a less visible process. In 1998 the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights together with the five-year review of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights brought some attention to the promotion of the rights of the child. Yet, despite this, child rights remained peripheral to the UN agenda and essentially confined to child rights mechanisms. The Resolution adopted in 2001 by the CHR is an expression of this state of affairs, calling on all UN mechanisms and relevant organs to include a child rights perspective in the fulfilment of their mandates (paragraph 6, CHR Resolution 2001/75).

Secretary General's Programme for Reform

The UN Secretary General's Programme for Reform, presented in 1997, gave a new dimension to the process of mainstreaming, calling for the integration of human rights across a broad range of UN activities. As a cross-cutting issue, human rights should inform the development and humanitarian agendas, guide the debate on peace and security and be enhanced by human rights programming and activities. Since then, the process of mainstreaming human rights and children's rights has been one and the same. The Millennium Declaration further stressed the focus on human rights as a cross-cutting issue that relates to all development goals and called on leaders to focus their efforts on the poorest and most disadvantaged.

The consideration of human rights, including the rights of the child, has gained a clear relevance in development co-operation. Set in motion by the United Nations Development Group, the CCA/UNDAF process is a prime example. Common Country Assessment (CCA) is designed to achieve a deeper knowledge of key development challenges at the country level, based on a common assessment, analysis and understanding of the country's situation. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is a strategic planning framework for development work at the country level promoted by the UN family and its major partners. This unique strategy to promote the operationalisation of human rights through development efforts follows an agenda shaped by the major UN conferences and the treaties in force at national level and is guided by assessment of the reality on the ground. The critical role of treaty monitoring bodies and the concluding observations on States Parties reports, together with relevant reports by Special Rapporteurs and other human rights mechanisms, has been highlighted as a key component of this process and has been reflected in relevant guidelines adopted to this effect, including the Guidelines on Human Rights for Resident Coordinators. The fact that the UNCRC is in force in virtually every country has certainly been a major factor in ensuring that children's rights receive proper attention in this UN process.

Strenuous mainstreaming efforts on human rights, with a particular focus on children's rights, have been set in motion by other actors in development, particularly NGOs (eg, International Save the Children Alliance) and bilateral development agencies (in countries such as Sweden, Norway, Canada, Ireland and the UK).

Equally, the Secretary General's call for the mainstreaming of human rights has had a major impact on the peace and security agenda. The discussions held by the Security Council on children in armed conflict in the last few years stand as a strong illustration of this trend. Children's concerns have become a component in thematic discussions and country-focused debates, for example, on the protection of civilians, in relation to the situation in Sierra Leone, Angola or the DRC. In addition, the

Special Rapporteurs of the CHR have been engaged in discussions as an important reference to the debate, such as when the Special Rapporteur on the DRC addressed the Security Council to share information on his mandate and address the plight of child soldiers. Peacekeeping and peace-building activities now incorporate the protection of children's rights; in some cases, child protection advisers have been included in peacekeeping missions to generate awareness of the rights of the child, promote child-centred action in the mission and encourage relevant collaboration between partners. Capacity-building activities for peacekeeping personnel include child rights issues.

In an unprecedented move, the President of the Security Council addressed the Executive Board of UNICEF on the work of the Council on children's concerns and the importance of a close collaboration between the Council and the Board (14 December 2001). This, the first-ever dialogue with an operational agency, opens avenues for the promotion of decision-making that is complementary and for the enhancement of existing co-operation. Above all, it is a critical step towards achieving greater coherence within the UN system and moving the mainstreaming of children's rights still further forward.

This brief overview gives an outline of the incremental process of child rights mainstreaming. Important efforts have been made in a wide range of areas to make children's rights a central and integral concern. Strategic opportunities have been sought to consolidate this process – as the most recent UN conferences on AIDS, Racism and Small Arms and Light Weapons clearly confirm. Children's rights have been further strengthened and mainstreamed through standard-setting activities, both within the human rights area – a process confirmed by the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that came into force earlier this year – and beyond, as demonstrated by the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

But there is so much left to do. We must address two major challenges: promoting the rights of the child as a distinct and relevant concern; and ensuring the steady operationalisation of child rights at national and international levels, in human rights activities, and in the agendas for development, humanitarian aid, peace and security. Only by bridging the gap between a commitment to the rights of the child and its translation into tangible policies and practice will we be successful in moving the child rights agenda forward.

Marta Santos Pais is director of UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Factfile

Definitions of mainstreaming

Mainstreaming child rights

Mainstreaming means bringing something from the margin into the mainstream, thereby making it acceptable to the majority. Mainstreaming [child rights] means turning child rights from a fringe issue to one that is at the centre of public attention and debate. It means getting institutions which have so far ignored children's rights to incorporate child rights into their agendas (Save the Children UK, 1996).

Mainstreaming human rights

Mainstreaming human rights refers to the concept of enhancing the human rights programme and integrating it into the broad range of United Nations activities, and into the areas of development and humanitarian action (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, www.unhchr.ch/development/mainstreaming.html).

Mainstreaming

For UNDP, mainstreaming involves bringing the outcomes of socio-economic and policy analysis into the core decision-making processes of an organisation. The skills required for mainstreaming are therefore analytic skills, advocacy skills and decision-making skills, in various combinations. This definition refers to the mainstreaming of all human-centred themes, not only of gender considerations. The skills required are therefore relevant across the board of development activity (The Gender in Development Programme, UNDP, www.sdnp.undp.org/gender/capacity/cb_programme_description.html).

Mainstreaming gender

Gender mainstreaming is a term that came into widespread use after the 1995 Fourth UN World Conference on Women and refers to the approach adopted by most governments, donor agencies and NGOs to ensure greater equality of opportunity. Each sectoral component of the Beijing Platform for Action includes the following 'mainstreaming paragraph':

'governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively'.

(ODI Key Sheet 4, Gender Mainstreaming, Key Sheets for Sustainable Livelihoods. Available on the Internet at: www.undp.org/fwcw/plat.htm for summary).

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Rapporteurs reach out to children

The work of Human Rights Special Rapporteurs has won widespread respect for its independence, so it is vital that children figure large in their concerns. But the rapporteurs need all the help they can get and NGOs have a role here, says Jean-Nicolas Beuze.

Photo: Eli Reed/Magnum Photos

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has established a number of special procedures over the last 20 years monitoring human rights, either according to country or theme. Thanks to their impartiality, these processes, such as those undertaken by the Special Rapporteurs, are highly respected by governments and NGOs alike and carry considerable weight regarding the promotion and protection of children's rights. Their observations are likely to be taken seriously by those responsible for their protection at home or internationally.

Given this situation, the Rapporteurs and the special procedures in general are also well placed to improve debate about children's rights within the UN system as a whole. To see how this potential for mainstreaming children's rights works in practice, let us take the case of the Special Rapporteur on torture.

Since 1995, the CHR has requested this Special Rapporteur "to examine questions concerning torture directed primarily against... children and conditions conducive to such torture, and to make appropriate recommendations concerning the prevention of... the torture of children" (Resolution 1995/36, para.5). Since then, all resolutions regarding this mandate have requested the holder to pay particular attention to this aspect. In response, the Special Rapporteur has specifically addressed this question on two occasions.

Sir Nigel Rodley, the previous Special Rapporteur on torture, noted in his first report that a separate comment on the issue of children and torture should be made. This was despite the lack of specific evidence to suggest that children were tortured or ill-treated more often than adults.

Sir Nigel noted that as children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and require special protection, they may suffer graver consequences through torture than similarly ill-treated adults. They are also particularly vulnerable to being tortured or ill-treated in a surrogate capacity, where the intended target is in fact the child's parents, other relatives or friends. Here the motive for torturing the child may be to force an individual connected to the child to confess or provide information, or to inflict punishment upon that person.

Specific concerns of the Special Rapporteur have centred on penal situations, where young people are detained for a long time before any trial takes place, often in overcrowded detention centres with adult prisoners. The Special Rapporteur has also noted that other children vulnerable to torture or ill-treatment are those on the streets, living in care – especially disabled children or children with learning difficulties – and children caught up in armed conflict. Serious concerns remain about the failure of some States to protect children in conflict – reports of violations include severe torture and ill-treatment meted out to child civilians and those recruited into armed forces.

117

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Photo: Tim Hetherington/Network Photographers

The current Special Rapporteur, Theo van Boven, who took over in December 2001, will continue to monitor situations involving children that fall within his mandate. With children said to be at risk he will send urgent appeals to the governments in question, requesting them to take the necessary measures to prevent a violation. For children that are allegedly victims of such treatment, he will send letters to governments listing the allegations and requesting them to bring the perpetrators to justice.

NGOs are very important in these processes, as the information they submit gives a Special Rapporteur specific targets to focus on. For example, if NGOs have reported that children are suffering from a systematic pattern of violations falling within his mandate, the Special Rapporteur could use a fact-finding visit to go to detention centres and take a good look at the juvenile justice system. He could then feed back his evidence, including individual cases, and if necessary, make specific recommendations to the relevant authorities. All activities of the Special Rapporteur on torture are published in annual reports to the CHR and the General Assembly. These receive plenty of attention from governments, the UN and other international agencies, as well as from NGOs and the media.

NGOs' information may form the basis of any Special Rapporteur's activities. The evidence NGOs provide will help make specific recommendations aimed at promoting child-related human rights to relevant authorities. It is therefore essential that NGOs focusing on children's issues provide reliable and detailed information, not only on individual cases, but also on patterns of violations primarily affecting the young. Such information, which may consist of either communications specifically addressed to a Special Rapporteur, or regular NGO activities reports, should be sent to the relevant special procedure at the address at the end of this feature.

The special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights have significant potential for the protection and promotion of child rights and therefore welcome more information from NGOs regarding violations. Issues of concern can then be properly highlighted in reports to the CHR and the General Assembly. However, resources for follow-up activities are scarce. So NGOs' other lobbying activities are central if the battle to bring the observations and recommendations of UN human rights experts to a wider audience is to be won for good and all.

Jean-Nicolas Beuze is assistant to the Special Rapporteur on torture.

The Special Rapporteur on torture can be contacted at the UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, OHCHR–UNOG, Palais des Nations, CH-1211, Geneva 10, Switzerland.

For further details, see reports of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on torture: E/CN.4/1996/35 (paras 9-17) and A/55/290 (paras 10-15). All the annual reports, mission reports, resolutions etc., of the thematic and country rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on torture, can be found on the OHCHR website (www.unhchr.ch).

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View from the front line

Kathy Vandergrift argues that putting children at the centre of the Security Council's work helps safeguard their rights. But the battle is far from over.

Photo: David Stewart-Smith

Imagine a child in the middle of the room during a Security Council debate. What a difference it would make if security for children, instead of national political interest, was the top priority on the mind of every member for every conflict in the world.

Children and war do not fit together. But the reality is that children have become deliberate targets and combatants, as well as victims, in contemporary conflicts. In 1996, the Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children documented the problem and proposed a plan of action.

A first step was getting the Security Council to recognise that violations of the security and rights of children are a threat to international peace and security and therefore, a matter for their attention. Resolution 1261 achieved that goal and called for regular reporting. As a result of the first report, for which NGOs submitted recommendations and met with council members, the subsequent Resolution 1314, called for more specific action, such as stopping the flow of small arms to forces that target children, continuing education as much as possible and paying attention to girls.

Achievement of the goal was bolstered at the first International Conference for War-Affected Children in 2000, where 138 countries, hosted by Canada, agreed to take action for child protection. Much of their action plan is now being incorporated into the outcome of the UN Special Session on Children, *A World Fit for Children* and hopefully will continue in the national action plans to follow.

Although the 2001 Special Session for Children was delayed, in November that year a former child soldier addressed a special session of the Security Council. Listening to a child did focus the minds of members on the urgency of this issue. The third resolution, Resolution 1379, is even stronger. It calls for a list of specific armed groups who misuse children, and asks members to take action against private sector actors who support armed forces that abuse the rights of children.

With strong general commitments from the Security Council in place, the next major challenge is to translate these pledges into action in specific situations. A recent NGO report pointed out that, in spite of council directions, many country reports say nothing about known violations of the security and rights of children. Yet, when children have been included in Security Council peace processes, the appointment of child protection officers and other measures has resulted in improved protection for children.

The lack of consistent monitoring, reporting and follow-up action remains a major hurdle. Constant vigilance will be needed from child advocates to ensure that these three Security Council resolutions make a genuine difference for the lives of children in specific situations.

In support of this new opportunity to protect children through the auspices of the Security Council, several child advocacy groups have now banded together to form the Watchlist for Children and Armed Conflict as a new lever for joint action. The Watchlist will pool information on violations of the security and rights of children in a specific situation, prepare a report with recommendations and use it as a lever to get action. The first Watchlist on Afghanistan was well-used and work is underway on Angola, Congo, Burundi and Sudan.

Putting children on the Security Council agenda has additional benefits. It has cleared the way for information from NGOs to inform council debates. It has also resulted in a call for action to stop companies who contribute to conflicts, one of the causes of war that developed countries are reluctant to acknowledge.

Progress is slow, but experience shows that putting children at the centre of Security Council debates can make a difference for them and for the cause of peace. Yet, the battle is not yet won and keeping a focus on children will require determined and sustained attention by all child rights advocates.

Kathy Vandergrift is senior policy analyst, World Vision Canada and co-chair of the Watchlist for Children and Armed Conflict, an international NGO partnership. She is also co-chair of the Children and Armed Conflict Caucus for the UN Special Session for Children and chair of the Canadian Children and Armed Conflict Working Group.

For more information about the Watchlist, go to www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=2220

The Security Resolutions are available on the Internet.
Security Council Resolution 1261 (1999) on Children and armed conflict at www.un.org/Docs/scres/1999/99sc1261.htm
Security Council Resolution 1379 (2001) on Children and armed conflict at www.un.org/Docs/scres/2001/res1379e.pdf
Security Council Resolution 1314 (2000) on Children and armed conflict at www.un.org/Docs/scres/2000/res1314e.pdf

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Making headway in the mainstream

Not everyone is on board where children's rights are concerned. So how can you get your message out in the mainstream? An active coalition group can certainly help, says Denise Allen.

Advocacy through the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child is proving an effective way of getting organisations to take on children's rights issues, particularly organisations which have given little or no attention to them before.

This mainstreaming, as it is sometimes described, is no easy undertaking, but the coalition has become a force to be reckoned with, especially where sexual exploitation is concerned.

The group, a network of international non-governmental organisations, formed itself into a coalition in 1983 in order to take part in the drafting process of the UNCRC. Today membership has swelled to 52 NGOs and the group is notable for collaboration and advocacy. In fact it is the only independent, international NGO network that is explicitly committed to the promotion and implementation of the UNCRC.

The NGO Group has targeted this goal both in and outside the United Nations. Its Liaison Unit plays a key role in helping NGOs get involved in the reporting process to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the official monitoring body of the UNCRC. The unit also follows the work of national child rights coalitions worldwide, giving it an authoritative overview of child rights work internationally. That helps processes get moving, identifying sectors suitable for a children's rights' agenda.

NGO Group members form subgroups and taskforces to work on themes related to specific articles of the UNCRC. These thematic areas include children in armed conflict and displacement, child labour, sexual exploitation and the Commission on Human Rights. These subgroups form an integral part of the NGO Group's work to ensure that children's rights are actively advanced within the UN system, as well as elsewhere. Through these, members have a platform for debate and action and a mechanism for uniting members to promote specific child rights. For example, the Subgroup on Children in Armed Conflict and Displacement has worked hard to bring home the question of how children are affected by war to organisations previously indifferent to this issue.

Photo: Dan White

This subgroup's work of mainstreaming child rights has taken place in four main areas.

First, it joined in the Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children and helped link the global NGO community with the research process. Second, the subgroup played a role in creating an advocacy focal point within the context of children in armed conflict, in the form of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Third, the subgroup has steadily pushed to become a credible focal point for UN agencies working on refugee-related issues, such as the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The subgroup is known to key departments within the UNHCR, which now pays greater attention to children's rights – a legitimate point, since the organisation's main dealings are with asylum-seekers, displaced people and refugees. Fourth, the subgroup continues to monitor the work of the UN Security Council and contributes its views, most recently towards implementation of Security Council resolutions 1261, 1314 and 1379 that refer to children and armed conflict.

The NGO Group has also been at the forefront of international organisations highlighting the commercial sexual exploitation of children. On this they have been outspoken and rigorous, targeting as many different audiences as possible to get their message across.

An excellent opportunity to do this came up when the group helped organise the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, Sweden in 1996. This meeting provided a head-to-head with governments, one of the best chances of getting real change. An international plan of action, the Stockholm Agenda for Action was the result. The plan demanded that all participating governments would take action on the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This move marked real progress since no such focus had existed before. The Stockholm Agenda for Action identified the need for an international information co-ordination and monitoring mechanism. This led to the NGO Group Focal Point on Sexual Exploitation of Children, a five-year project leading to the Second World Congress.

The Focal Point has provided information on child sexual exploitation to a range of organisations, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child. And it has kept up the pressure, organising consultations and regional workshops to examine progress since Stockholm, as well as pinpointing the challenges and taking on new issues as they emerge.

The largest consultation that the Focal Point has been involved in was for the Second World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), held in Yokohama, Japan, in December 2001. Not allowing the issue to drop off the agenda for a moment has been crucial to the Focal Point's success. It has kept it in the forefront of people's minds, both within the development community, and more importantly in the world beyond, especially in those sectors which have never sat up and taken notice before. However, despite the unquestionable gains, new challenges have emerged. The major one is the Internet, which has created a virtual market for exploiting children.

The NGO Group is also actively promoting child rights within the larger human rights system. Its most recent subgroup is concentrating on the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and will be pressing for children's rights to be a central consideration when decisions are made in all branches of the United Nations.

These experiences illustrate how an active NGO coalition can be a very useful way of reaching different sectors and new audiences. Real action improving children's lives is the heartening result.

Denise Allen is liaison officer (monitoring) at the Liaison Unit of the NGO Group for the CRC.

For further information on the NGO Group, please refer to www.crin.org/NGOGroupforCRC.
NGO Alternative Reports to the Committee on the rights of the Child can be viewed at: www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/crc.25/annex-vi-crin.htm

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Closer contacts offer a golden campaigning opportunity

A new group will give NGOs their best chance yet to get child rights a bigger and wider audience within the Commission on Human Rights. Ahmed Motala explains why this is such good news.

Photo: Jenny Matthews

Campaigning for child rights has been given a powerful boost with a new body at the heart of the United Nations that can lobby throughout the year on behalf of young people and their needs.

The creation of the Subgroup on the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), part of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is a highly significant move. It extends both the scope and scale of NGOs' power when campaigning for child rights to be at the centre of decision-making by the CHR, one of the main policy bodies of the United Nations.

The CHR, established in June 1946, has 53 members. Its mandate includes monitoring compliance with existing international standards, developing and recommending the adoption of new international human rights standards and investigating violations. It meets for six weeks once a year during March and April and over the years has established a range of special mechanisms to monitor and investigate human rights violations. These include Special Rapporteurs, Working Groups, Independent Experts and Special Representatives, all of which operate around a specific thematic or country mandate.

Until now the structure and process of CHR sessions have limited NGOs' opportunities to lobby about children's rights in relation to how the Commission itself operates. Because the CHR only meets for a few weeks once a year, all its activity has been confined to just that period, taking place through Children's Rights Caucus.

In previous years, the temporary establishment of a Children's Rights Caucus enabled NGOs to get together, talk about their work and co-ordinate their campaigning activities during the sessions. It has always been seen as a key opportunity for getting across child rights issues and their central messages to a broad range of audiences, but there was never enough time to be really effective. Given that the Commission is the main policy-making body of the United Nations dealing with human rights, this once-a-year arrangement was clearly inadequate, as any work done was never properly developed.

But the presence of this new subgroup, co-ordinated by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), will end this 'stop-go' pattern as the work can now continue outside the sessions of the Commission. This synergy is further enhanced as OMCT is also co-ordinating the Children's Rights Caucus.

This set-up means the annual session of the CHR can both define the work of, and provide a focus for, the

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subgroup. For example, at the 58th Session of the CHR (18 March to 26 April 2002), the following activities were prepared:

- lobbying on the text of the Omnibus Resolution on the Rights of the Child, a resolution which consolidates the many initiatives on child rights within the CHR;
- lobbying for the mainstreaming of child rights within other resolutions (eg. on juvenile justice, education, torture, etc.); and,
- organisation of two side events during the sessions on 'Violence Against Children' and 'Mainstreaming of Children's Rights'.

The subgroup began life after the 2001 CHR session. Its brief was to ensure that any advocacy on children's rights was organised in good time before the start of the next session. This emphasis on being better prepared, acknowledged the necessity of giving greater attention and higher profile to children's issues within the CHR itself and the work it was doing.

NGOs carry a big responsibility in making sure child rights are integrated into the workings of all aspects of the CHR. But to do this they have to have the right channels in place. Alliances, partnerships and collaborative working, as demonstrated by the subgroup and the Children's Rights Caucus, are all part of this vital network. Once the processes are there, undoubtedly NGOs are immensely effective in strengthening a common position.

But what exactly are the benefits of such collaboration? The first and immediate pay-off is that a broader range of children's rights can be lobbied for and then pursued at the sessions of the CHR, since more NGOs can cover issues they consider to be a priority or which fall within their mandate. This makes the most of child rights advocacy and getting the message across to other audiences who do not have children at the centre of their thinking. In short, backed by the right preparations, people's eyes can be opened perhaps for the first time and in ways they will not readily forget.

Although the CHR's decisions are not legally binding on states, almost every government, however dismissive it may be of the UN, is extremely sensitive to criticism of its human rights record by the CHR or its special mechanisms. The CHR, therefore, provides a framework with considerable potential for mainstreaming child rights and significant opportunities for NGOs during the annual sessions not only to campaign but also to monitor that governments are doing what they promised.

However, there is still much to be done. Although the CHR adopts a resolution on the rights of the child in general at each session, known as the Omnibus Resolution, and in addition to those that do exist (eg. trafficking of women and girls), its other resolutions often have little or no reference to children's issues.

Apart from those mechanisms that do deal specifically with children, such as the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, most special mechanisms of the CHR fail to give sufficient attention to violations against young people. Given this situation, many child rights organisations resort to raising child rights issues under any relevant agenda item at the sessions.

The annual sessions of the CHR are the most important events in the human rights calendar, so the new subgroup presents an unmissable opportunity for NGOs to achieve concerted and comprehensive action in promoting child rights to bigger and more varied audiences. An improved platform for joint campaigning is now a distinct possibility.

Ahmed Motala is human rights officer at Save the Children UK.

For further information on the Commission on Human Rights please contact: The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, OHCHR – UNOG, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Tel: 00 41 22 917-9000; Fax: 00 41 22 917 9016; Website: www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/2/chr.htm

For further information on the Subgroup on the Commission on Human Rights, please contact: Roberta Cecchetti, Subgroup on the Commission on Human Rights, c/o OMCT, 8 rue du Vieux-Billard, P.O. Box 21, CH-1211 Geneva 8, Switzerland. Tel: 00 41 22 809 49 39; Fax: 00 41 22 809 49 29; Email: rc@omct.org; Website: www.crin.org/NGOGroupforCRC. From 25 March to 19 April, email the Children's Rights Caucus at childrensrightscaucus2002@yahoo.com

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Tackling violence against children

Impunity and lack of attention, as well as gaps in existing human rights mechanisms, allow violence of children to continue. Time for a global study on violence to sort this out, say Helena Gezelius, Melanie Gow and Roberta Cecchetti.

The issue of violence against children is about to receive long-overdue attention following a decision by the UN General Assembly to request the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth international study on this topic. Child rights NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child welcome the study and view it as a good opportunity to expose the extent of the problem and identify safeguards that would better ensure protection to children from violence.

The UN study on violence against children would include all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, including sexual abuse, bullying in schools and corporal punishment and should also pay attention the impact of discrimination. This would cover violence within the family and home, in schools and care or residential institutions both State and private, in work situations and in the streets, in detention facilities and prisons, violence by police and the use of capital and physical punishment.

Many millions of children are violently abused. Experience by child rights NGOs has shown that cases of torture and ill treatment of children are neither sporadic nor isolated acts – rather they are part of a systemic phenomenon. Violence against children is widespread and violent behaviour all too much the norm within the family, community and state institutions. Legislation giving children equal protection under laws on assault only exists in ten countries. In at least 50 States juveniles are still sentenced to whipping or flogging by courts and in more than a third of states worldwide corporal punishment (ritualised beating with sticks or belts) is still in use in schools.

NGOs including EPOCH-worldwide, Human Rights Watch, the Global Initiative to End All Corporal punishment of Children, Save the Children, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and World Vision International have worked on the topic. They have carried out advocacy and liaison work on which future action will be built.

OMCT alone has documented and acted on over 3,600 cases, in 62 countries, of child victims of torture, summary executions, forced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and other more subtle forms of violence.

Human Rights Watch has also conducted investigations in nearly 20 countries, which relate to violence against children. These have examined police abuse against street children, police torture during interrogations, abuse in orphanages and detention centres, employer violence against working children, and violence in the schools (including sexual violence against schoolgirls, the use of corporal punishment, and violence and harassment against gay, lesbian and bisexual students). Last year, Human Rights Watch published a summary report entitled 'Easy Targets: Violence Against Children Worldwide'. The report found that children are at risk of violence in nearly every aspect of their lives – in school, on the street, at work and in institutions."

World Vision over the past two years has analysed the extent of child abuse, violence and neglect in a number of countries and communities. From this research the organisation has developed a series of concrete recommendations for addressing various forms of violence against children. Aimed at policy makers, the recommendations call for strong and enforced laws, for the participation of children in their own protection and for access to strong community resources such as help lines. Other work by World Vision has now moved into the development of practioners' tools for preventing violence against children, protecting children and assisting children who are survivors.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has also given considerable attention to the issue of violence

against children. In September 2000 at the twenty-fifth session of the Committee, one day was devoted to a general discussion of state violence against children. Then in September 2001 at the twenty-eighth session, the Committee examined the theme of violence against children in the family and in schools.

Following the 2000 and 2001 days of general discussions the Committee on the Rights of the Child, supported by several NGOs, first recommended to the General Assembly that an in-depth international study on violence against children be conducted. The Committee called for a study that should be 'as thorough and influential as the Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children', and outlined the scope of the proposed study.

The decision of the UN General Assembly in December 2001 now means that the General Assembly will discuss the UN study in more detail at the fifty-seventh session under the item entitled 'Promotion and protection of the rights of children. Already the General Assembly has decided that the study will take into account the outcome of the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children, and 'put forward recommendations for consideration by Member States for appropriate action, including effective remedies and preventive and rehabilitative measures.'

Many child rights NGOs welcome this study and believe it has the potential to bring about some real improvements in the ways children are treated. Many NGOs wish for a person of similar standing as Graca Machel to lead the study - and that she or he be supported by a secretariat of its own. So far, however, little has been decided about how the study will be carried out. Participation in the study by civil society is another important aspect that remains to be determined.

Save the Children has said that the involvement of civil society will be critical to the success of this second UN study and hopes that child rights NGOs will be invited to participate from the start. Direct consultation with, and participation of children is another important aspect and should be formally built into the study. Save the Children contributed substantially to the Machel Study by participating in the study on recruitment of child soldiers and other thematic papers prepared by NGOs, as well the technical advisory group for the study and regional consultations.

But while there is much support for the UN study some feel that shortcomings of existing human rights mechanisms must be addressed right away.

OMCT is currently arguing for the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on violence against children, yet it also support the UN study. Their argument is laid out in a study entitled 'Violence against Children and UN mechanism: a new procedure to address children's rights?'. This study documents cases of violence against children and shows that these account for only a small percentage of the total cases presented to special mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights. OMCT argues that loopholes exist so that cases go unreported; cases of violence against children are not adequately dealt with by existing human rights mechanisms; and the mandate of the Committee on the Rights of the Child is too limited to tackle the issue.

While OMCT recognises that mandates of some special rapporteurs, working groups, independent experts and special representative address issues that pertain to violence against children, none sufficiently integrate children's rights within their activities. There is no clear allocation of responsibility for child rights, and consequently accountability is lost. As an example of some of the loopholes that exist with current human right mechanisms, the OMCT study shows that in 2000 the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention did not consider one single case that concerned a child. This finding is disturbing given the high frequency of cases wherein children are deprived of their liberty. Children can spend long periods awaiting trials and they are at high risk of torture or ill treatment in these situations.

Helena Gezelius is representative to the International Save the Children Alliance in Geneva, Melanie Gow is senior policy advisor, child rights at World Vision and Roberta Cecchetti is children's rights programme manager at World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

For more information about a joint NGO statement on violence against children, contact Helena Gezelius at helena@savethechildren.ch

For more information about the Committee on the Rights of the Child general days of discussions on Violence Against Children (2000 and 2001), go to http://www.crin.org/themes/viewTheme.asp?ID=15&name=Violence+against+Children. This includes links to the report and recommendations from the Committee and contributions by participants.

Go to the website of the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children at www.endcorporalpunishment.org for details of human rights, law and corporal punishment, as well as global progress and research on this topic.

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Doing the business for children's rights

The business world faces mounting pressure to respect human rights, especially the rights of children. Progress will be made by strengthening international laws, declares Fairouz El-Tom.

Respecting human rights used to be of marginal concern to corporations and private companies. But global concern about abuse and injustice from shareholder, NGO and the media means business can no longer ignore its own responsibilities with regard to human rights.

The spotlight used to be trained almost exclusively on the conduct of governments, but the pendulum of concern is now swinging the way of private organisations, of which businesses make up a large part. Civil society is increasing the pressure on companies to be both accountable for, and mindful of, children's human rights in their business practice.

The role of law is central to this debate, specifically the extent to which international legislation applies to companies with regard to how human rights are defined or enforced. Though the idea of human rights encompasses much more than narrow legal definitions, international standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) are basic reference points, and serve as a first base for discussions about business practice.

However, governments and companies have shown a distinct preference for limiting the debate to voluntary standards and self-regulation. They have treated documents such as the UDHR and UNCRC as useful references for inspiration and guidance rather than sources of legal obligations. This can be seen in the case of the guidelines for multinationals, as negotiated at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Other codes of conduct look specifically at child rights, eg, the Sialkot Code of Conduct, which aims to eliminate child labour from football production.

The question then arises: can international human rights law be applied not only to states but also to private bodies?

Looking at children's rights, the UNCRC has provided a common language for addressing and defining the issue of children's rights. Considering aspects relating to business operations, for instance, Article 32 describes the types of work from which children should be protected.

Another human rights instrument which identifies unacceptable forms of child labour is ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. This convention prohibits and calls for the elimination of all forms of slavery, forcible recruitment for armed conflict, the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution or illicit activities, and work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. The Convention requires ratifying states to design and implement programmes of action to eliminate

Photo: Dario Mitidieri

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the worst forms of child labour and establish or designate appropriate mechanisms to monitor the Convention's implementation.

ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, stipulates that no child younger than 15 should be employed. Countries whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may allow employment of children from the age of 14. The Convention also prohibits children under the age of 18 to engage in hazardous work.

Though primarily concerned with state obligations, these instruments provide a basis for extending international legal obligations to companies in two ways:

- States have a duty to protect human rights and in consequence must ensure that private actors, including companies, do not abuse them. This duty on states gives rise to indirect obligations on companies.
- International law can place direct legal obligations on companies which might be enforced internationally when states are unable or unwilling to take action themselves.

It is increasingly clear that voluntary codes and unofficial means of monitoring compliance should be complemented by legal rules and legal accountability. This is not to say that legal or voluntary approaches should substitute each other, but rather that there is space for both. Voluntary codes will make binding regulation more likely to succeed because they have started to build consensus, or at least understanding, around some core rights. However, serious attention needs to be given to the role international law can play in ensuring companies' accountability in relation to human rights.

In a world where business is increasingly global, only international law can provide a framework of legal accountability, for it offers an objective and coherent benchmark by which to measure whether business respects fundamental human rights. Furthermore, it is the only internationally agreed expression of the minimum conditions that everyone should enjoy if they are to live with dignity as human beings.

Fairouz El-Tom is research assistant at the International Council on Human Rights Policy in Geneva, Switzerland. This paper was written based on the International Council's forthcoming publication, *Beyond Voluntarism: Human rights and the developing international legal obligations of companies*. See www.international-council.org.

Factfile

The Child Rights Advocacy Project

Children have a wide range of human rights, which are not only elaborated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also are protected and defined by many other human rights instruments and mechanisms established by the United Nations and by regional organisations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Organization of American States (OAS). Children's rights and interests could be promoted and protected more effectively by making use of all available avenues, rather than focusing exclusively on the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

The Child Rights Advocacy Project aims to provide a comprehensive toolkit for the use of human rights instruments and mechanisms for children other than the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in order to complement the work done with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its committee. This website deals with the five other core treaties of international human rights law, and their respective supervisory mechanisms. It also covers the non-treaty-based mechanisms (such as the work of the Independent Experts of the Commission on Human Rights), which are applicable to all UN members independent of their accession to, or ratification of, human rights treaties. Guidance is also offered in order to provide the user with some indications as to the most effective way to use these mechanisms, and the treaty-based bodies.

This online resource is available at the following website address:
www.savethechildren.org.uk/mcr/index.htm

For more information, contact: The Child Rights Advocacy Project, Advocacy Unit, Save the Children Fund UK, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, UK. Tel: 00 44 (0) 20 7703 5400. Email: s.odonoghue@scfuk.org.uk

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Bringing the charter to Africa's children

Africa's special perspective on children's rights is now established, but the impact is yet to be seen. Wambui Njuguna reports on how the continent's nations got together to make the Convention its own.

Few African countries were involved in the Convention on the Rights of the Child when it was being drafted in Geneva and, while the convention's general comprehensiveness was acknowledged, its failure to take account of the situation of children in specific regions was highlighted.

This issue came to the fore during the Children in Situations of Armed Conflict in Africa Conference (Kenya, 1987) organised by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) and supported by UNICEF.

It was here that the idea of developing an African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child emerged. The conference recommended a regional meeting to examine the draft convention from the African perspective taking account of issues particular to Africa, such as children living under apartheid (as was the case at the time) or those whose mothers had been imprisoned.

A working group was established by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in collaboration with ANPPCAN to work on the charter, preparing a draft on children's rights and welfare for African governments to consider. In July 1990 the draft African Charter was adopted at the Heads of State Summit in Ethiopia.

But, despite the rapid initial progress, by July 1997 only seven countries of the 15 required had ratified it. This low rate especially concerned the Continental Conference on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (1997) as did the failure to implement the recommendations from the 1987 conference ten years previously.

As a result, an OAU Special Committee on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict was set up to ensure that conference recommendations were acted on. This committee, whose members came from governments, relevant UN agencies and NGOs operating in Africa, took the ratification of the African Charter very seriously and set a deadline of 2000 for the charter to come into force.

The Special Committee pushed for ratification through lobby missions (special visits to identified African countries) and during various regional meetings such as the Conference on Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in 1998. An information kit about the African Charter further supported such moves and members of the special committee also wrote letters of appeal to different countries, encouraging them to ratify the charter. Copies of the text of the charter were also produced and distributed widely.

These efforts paid off with the required number of ratifications being obtained and the African Charter coming into force in November 1999. This was quickly followed by the need for further promotion across Africa, both to raise awareness of its regional powers and to encourage its implementation. The Special Committee realised that there were many avenues that could be used to both promote the charter and address other issues relating to children in Africa. As a result, it encouraged its members to organise regional and sub-regional meetings, which led to the development of the Inter-Agency Thematic Group.

This group then held its first meeting in November 2000 to consider how the African Charter could be promoted and benefit from the many networks and contacts of its different members. ANPPCAN has played a particularly pivotal role in the effective dissemination of the charter through its training and advocacy activities. The Regional Office has now

Photo: Jenny Matthews

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incorporated the African Charter as a key component in its training for professional groups and community leaders, while all participants in ANPPCAN training courses also receive copies of it. Related activities are planned as the Inter-Agency Thematic Group intends to develop training and advocacy materials specifically related to the charter.

The results of this work have led to its extensive distribution to varied institutions, organisations and governments in Africa, encouraging them to share, implement and integrate elements of the African Charter into their national documents. Schools, colleges and rights awareness clubs have also acted as distribution points, and child welfare agencies have used elements of the charter as a lobbying tool.

In terms of international standards, the African Charter is relatively young. However, as with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it has a provision for monitoring its implementation. A committee was elected to do this in June 2001 and will take over from the Special Committee in March this year. One of the key interests of this body is expected to be the role NGOs can play in the reporting process regarding the implementation of the African Charter, which is a vital step in its introduction to broader audiences.

Through the establishment of the Inter-Agency Thematic Group, a wider network of organisations working to promote the African Charter throughout the continent has been established. Through this collaboration, the members of the group have been able to share resources and disseminate information about the charter to far more people than an organisation working alone would have been able to do.

This example illustrates the promotion and dissemination of a new regional mechanism to support child rights in the African context. What remains to be seen, however, is the impact of this treaty on the lives of African children and the extent to which it can be used to promote child rights as a central consideration in all policy and planning decisions. But make no mistake, this continuing effort to protect and uphold their rights marks an important start.

Wambui Njuguna is director of programmes of the ANPPCAN Regional Office in Kenya.

Membership of the Inter-Agency Thematic Group is fluid, but particularly active members include UNICEF ESARO, UNHCR, Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK, ICRC, the OAU and ANPPCAN. For the full text of the Charter, go to:
http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/africancharter.htm

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131

Publications

New publications - child rights

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Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (2001) *Rights, Reconstruction and Enduring Peace: Afghan women and children after the Taliban*, New York

Membership Form

Name of organisation

Acronym/abbreviation | Year established

English translation of name of organisation

Name of director

Name of main CRIN contact in your organisation

Postal address (include country)

Tel (include country codes) | Fax (include country codes)

Email | Website

Number of staff

Languages used

Does your organisation have capacity to receive email regularly?

Does your organisation have capacity to visit websites regularly?

Number of CRIN Newsletters required in English, French and/or Spanish

Please give a short description of your organisation's aims and activities
(please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

List countries in which your organisation works
(please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

Please tick the appropriate box

How do you describe your organisation?
- ☐ Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
- ☐ United Nations agency
- ☐ Community-based organisation
- ☐ Research institute
- ☐ International organisation
- ☐ Governmental organisation

Does your organisation?
- ☐ Work directly with children
- ☐ Lobby governments and the United Nations
- ☐ Work in partnership with other organisations
- ☐ Provide training on children's rights
- ☐ Provide funding to other organisations
- ☐ Undertake research on children's rights
- ☐ Work with the media and press
- ☐ Undertake legal casework on behalf of children

Which age group does your organisation target?
☐ Children 0–4 ☐ Children 5–15 ☐ Children 16–18

Does your organisation have expertise in any of the following themes?
- ☐ Children in care, fostering and adoption
- ☐ Children living with HIV/AIDS
- ☐ Child labour and working children
- ☐ Individual cases of violations
- ☐ Children in armed conflict
- ☐ Children in conflict with the law
- ☐ Reporting and monitoring on the CRC
- ☐ Children and the media
- ☐ Children with disabilities
- ☐ Participation of children in decision making
- ☐ Children and education
- ☐ Refugee and unaccompanied children
- ☐ Environment and habitat
- ☐ Sexual exploitation of children
- ☐ Children and health
- ☐ Children working and living on the street

Signature | Date

Please photocopy and return this completed form along with any relevant publications, newsletters, annual reports and brochures to:

Child Rights Information Network, c/o Save the Children, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, UK

Tel +44 (0)20 7716 2400 Fax +44 (0)20 7793 7628 Email info@crin.org

CRIN Membership form

Joining CRIN is free. CRIN's membership policy requires that you (1) work for an organisation that supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (2) are involved in child rights activities, (3) are committed to sharing information. CRIN is an open network of members and therefore holds no official status beyond that of its member organisations. CRIN is unable to accredit any member organisation or provide funding for its members. Unless funding is directly related to one of CRIN's projects approved by CRIN's management team.

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Calender of events

Events for April - September 2002

April

3–20 April, Cape Town, South Africa

International Human Rights Academy (IHRA)
Law Faculty of the Western Cape
Private Bag x17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
W www.uwc.ac.za/law/

11–13 April, Ohio, USA

A conference on HIV/AIDS and the African Child: Health Challenges, Educational Possibilities
Institute of the African Child
Mr. Abdul Lamin
Burson House, Ohio University, Athens, OH 45701, USA
E lamin@ohio.edu
W www.ohiou.edu/toguna/

11–14 April, Lebanon, Cyprus

Early Childhood Education and Development Programme: Regional Consultative Workshop Launching a new Arabic ECD Training Manual
Arab Resource Collective
PO Box 13-5916, Beirut, Lebanon
T +9611 742 075; F +9611 742 077;
E ecd@mawared.org
W www.mawared.org

15–17 April, Karachi, Pakistan

Trafficking in Women and Children within South Asia Conference
Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid
D-1, First Floor, Court View Appartments, Court Road, Karachi 74200, Pakistan
T +9221 5674031; F +9221 5685938;
E lhrla@fascom.com
W www.lhrla.org

16–17 April, Melbourne, Australia

Workshop on Using Rights to Advance Child Centred Development
PLAN Australia
PO Box 2818AA, Melbourne, VIC, 3001, Australia
T +61 3 9296 3722;
E anna.parle@plan.org.au
W www.plan.org.au

17–28 April, The Hague, The Netherlands

Post Graduate Diploma in Children and Development
Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776, 2502 LT The Hague, Netherlands
T +31 70 4260 460; F +31 70 4260 799;
E student.office@iss.nl
W www.iss.nl

United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children

8-10 May, New York, USA

UN General Assembly Special Session on Children
UNICEF, UNICEF House, 3 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, USA

- For intergovernmental related issues:
  Secretariat for the Special Session on Children
  F +1 212 303 7992
- For non-governmental organisations related issues:
  The NGO Participation Team
  T +1 212 326 7711; F +1 212 303 7990; E nyhq.ngo@unicef.org
  W www.unicef.org/specialsession/ngo/index.html
- For communication and media related issues:
  Division of Communication, Special Session on Children focal points
  E press@unicef.org (for media only)

The process for the accreditation of new NGOs has been closed.

6-7 May, New York, USA

Children's Forum
UNICEF, UNICEF House, 3 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, USA

- For more information, contact:
  Child Participation Unit,
  T + 1 212 326 7195, F + 1 212 824 6470
  E jwijnants@unicef.org or
  prajasegera@unicef.org
  W www.unicef.org/specialsession/under-18/index.html

A maximum of two children per government- or NGO delegation will attend the Forum. Because of limited space and the large number of children expected to enrol at the Forum, UNICEF cannot accommodate any new nominations from NGOs who did not already pre-register children in September 2001.

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May

16–19 May, Lebanon, Cyprus

Children's Rights Programme: Regional Consultative Workshop Follow-up of the Special Session on Children by Arab NGOs
Arab Resource Collective
PO Box 13-5916, Beirut, Lebanon
T +9611 742 075; F +9611 742 077;
E ecd@mawared.org
W www.mawared.org

21 May – 7 June, Geneva, Switzerland

30th Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child,
Secretariat for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
T +41 22 917 9000; F +41 22 917 9016;
E pdavid.hchr@unog.ch
W www.unhchr.ch

21–25 May, Victoria, Canada

International Children's Conference on the Environment
United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
Kathryn Molloy
International Children's Conference on the Environment Canada 2002
576 Niagara St, Victoria, BC, Canada, V8V 1H7
T +1 250 995 0225; F +1 250 995 0206;
E kathryn@iccCanada2002.org
W www.iccCanada2002.org

June

4–20 June, Geneva, Switzerland

90th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILO)
International Labour Organization
Official Relations Branch, 4 Route des Morillons, CH1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland
T +41 22 799 7732;
F +41 22 799 8944; E RELOFF@ilo.org
W www.ilo.org

July

7–10 July, Denver, USA

14th International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect
International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
and The Kempe Children's Foundation: International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
25 W. 560 Geneva Rd, Suite L2C, Carol Stream, IL 60188,USA.
T +1 630 221 1331; F +1 630 221 1313;
E ispcan@aol.com
W www.ispcan.org

7–12 July, Barcelona, Spain

XIV International Aids Conference
International Aids Society
P.O. Box 4249, 102 65 Stockholm, Sweden
T +46 8 556 970 50; F +46 8 556 970 59;
E secretariat@ias.se
W www.ias.se

13–30 July, Yogyakarta & Semarang, Indonesia

The International Trainings on Maternal and Child Health
Centre for Indonesian Medical Students Activities (CIMSA)
Berlian Idriansyah Idris
Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia, Students' Council
Jl. Salemba Raya No.6, Jakarta Pusat 10430, Indonesia
T +62 21 391 3063; F +62 21 314 8706;
E b.idris@mch-training.org
W http://mch-training.org

August

8–11 August, Tampere, Finland

The International Foster Care Organisation European Conference (IFCO)
Central Union for Child Welfare
Armfeltintie 1, Fin 00150 Helsinki, Finland
T +358 9 3296 0204; F +358 9 3296 0299;
E merja.launis@lskl.fi
W www.perhehoitoliitto.fi/ifco2002/

September

16 September – 4 October, Geneva, Switzerland

31st Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Secretariat, Committee on the Rights of the Child
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR-UNOG
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
T +41 22 917 9000; F +41 22 917 9016;
E pdavid.hchr@unog.ch
W www.unhchr.ch

20 September, Geneva, Switzerland

The Private Sector as a Service Provider and its Role in Implementing Child Rights – Day of General Discussion by the Committee
Secretariat, Committee on the Rights of the Child
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR-UNOG
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
T +41 22 917 9000; F +41 22 917 9016;
E pdavid.hchr@unog.ch
W www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/crcdod4.htm

23–27 September, Arusha, Tanzania

Nurturing the Future: Challenges for Breast Feeding in the 21st Century
World Alliance for Breast Feeding Action – Global Forum 2
P O Box 1200,10850, Penang, Malaysia
T +60 4 658 4816; F +60 4 657 2655;
E secr@waba.po.my
W www.waba.org.br

Information

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a membership-driven organisation and network of more than 1,200 child rights organisations around the world. It strives to improve the lives of children through the exchange of information about child rights and the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A website
Updated regularly, the website, which is a leading resource on child rights issues, contains references to hundreds of publications, recent news and forthcoming events as well as details of organisations working worldwide for children. The site also includes reports submitted by NGOs to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

An email service
Distributed twice a week, CRINMAIL provides regular news bulletins about child rights issues, as well as information about new publications and forthcoming events.

A newsletter
Published three times per year, the newsletter is a thematic publication that examines a specific issue affecting children. It also summarises news, events, campaigns and publications.

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www.crin.org
Bookmark CRIN's website to learn more, or email us to contribute news or information.

CRIN is supported by Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK, the International Save the Children Alliance and the United Nations Children's Fund.

Previous issues

CRIN Newsletter 12, March 2000:
Education

CRIN Newsletter 13, November 2000:
Children and Macroeconomics

CRIN Newsletter 14, June 2001:
The Special Session on Children

136

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ild Rights Information Network Number 16 / October 2002

Children and young people's participation

Changing world opens door to children *Roger Hart and Gerison Lansdown chart participation's progress*

The view from here: reports from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Arab world and Europe *rom Henk van Beers, Claire O'Kane and Ravi Karkara, Julia Ekstedt and Blanca Nomura, Nizar Rammal nd Raša Sekulović*

Knowing rights from wrong – child workers learn to fight back *by Uchengamma, 14-year-old resident of working children's union Bhima Sangha*

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a membership-driven organisation and network of over 1,295 child rights organisations around the world. It strives to improve the lives of children through the exchange of information about child rights and the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

137

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CRIN Newsletter - call for papers

The editorial team of the CRIN Newsletter would like to receive accounts of current projects, initiatives and latest developments from child rights practitioners working to support and promote the rights of children.

From community-based programmes addressing child rights implementation to lobbying for child rights internationally, the editorial team is keen to capture these diverse experiences and local stories to further the development and support the institutionalisation of child rights on a global scale. Through this, CRIN seeks to both empower the child rights community and accelerate the implementation of the UNCRC.

Published since 1996, the aim of the CRIN Newsletter is to present information about key thematic areas relevant to the child rights community worldwide. Specifically, it aims to share experiences, challenges and critical issues pertinent to those working in the field of child rights in addition to providing resource updates in terms of news, events and publications.

Strategically, CRIN aims to democratise information on child rights and encourage information-sharing between different parts of the world and different actors regarding the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Each issue of the CRIN Newsletter takes a thematic focus: for example, issue **13 Macroeconomics**; issue **14 Special Session on Children**; issue **15 Mainstreaming Child Rights**; issue **16 Children and Young People's Participation**. It is produced in English, French and Spanish, three times a year, in March, July and November. Distribution per edition is over 5,500 copies plus approximately 15,000 in electronic format.

New: To further encourage information-sharing from around the world, with particular focus on organisations based in the South, CRIN is dedicating an annual edition to examine developments in child rights at local and national levels. This specific issue will not be thematic, but rather, will present a range of articles relating to concerns and challenges of promoting and supporting child rights at these levels. This issue will be entitled 'Voices from the Regions' [working title], the first of which is forthcoming in December 2003.

A full list of future thematic and regional issues of the CRIN Newsletter can be found below.

17 Private Sector, deadline 15 November 2002
18 Voices from the Regions, deadline 1 December 2002
19 HIV/AIDS, deadline 1 April 2003
20 Children and Armed Conflict, deadline 1 August 2003
21 Voices from the Regions, deadline 1 December 2003
22 Child Labour, deadline 1 April 2004
23 Sexual Exploitation, deadline 1 August 2004
24 Voices from the Regions, deadline 1 December 2004

Each article should be between 650 and 850 words and the editor's decision is final. Articles for consideration should be written in English and submitted by email or post to the editor, noting which issue the article relates to. The editorial team reserves the right to edit and amend articles for publication in the CRIN Newsletter.

Please send all enquiries and submissions to:

The Editor, CRIN Newsletter
Child Rights Information Network
c/o Save the Children
17 Grove Lane
London SE5 8RD
United Kingdom
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Fax: +44 (0)20 7793 7628
Email: editor@crin.org

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CRIN Newsletter Number 16

Children and Young People's Participation

3 **Editorial**

4 News round-up

6 **Letters to the editor**

9 **Children and Young People's Participation**

9 Changing world opens door to children by Roger Hart and Gerison Lansdown

12 A world fit for us, a message from the Children's Forum to UNGASS

13 Young citizens for a new era in South and Central Asia by Ravi Karkara and Claire O'Kane

15 A place at the top table in South America by Julia Ekstedt and Blanca Nomura

17 Why sharing matters when you are young and powerless in the Arab world by Nizar Rammal

19 Pushing the participation agenda – experiences from Africa by Henk van Beers

21 A long road ahead for children in South Eastern Europe by Raša Sekulović

23 Factfile: Guide to participatory research

24 Young Ugandans use participation to cope with the aftermath of war by Allison Anderson Pillsbury and Akello Betty Openy

26 Stepping stone to a healthy and happier future by Alice Welbourn

28 Hard lessons from Zimbabwe's children's parliament by Chris McIvor

30 Factfile: Guide to creating the right environment for children and young people's participation

31 Knowing rights from wrong in India by Uchengamma, president of Bhima Sangha State Committee

33 Telling it like it is: young disabled people join forces by Carolyne Willow and Bill Badham

35 **Publications**

35 Thematic publications – children and young people's participation

36 New publications – child rights

37 **Calendar of events**

CRIN Newsletter editorial team: Andrea Khan, managing editor; Laura Greenwood, editor; Bill Bell, editorial adviser; Gerison Lansdown, guest editorial adviser; Maisha Frost, sub-editor; Elizabeth Snyder, research assistant; Paula McDiarmid, proof-reader; management team: Sven Winberg, Save the Children Sweden; Katharina Borchardt, UNICEF; Bill Bell, Save the Children UK; and Youssef Hajjar, Arab Resource Collective. Translated into French by Isabelle Fernández, SOL language and Spanish by Francisco Artza, Planet Translations. Design by Greenhouse.

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Editorial

The term 'participation' suggests certain characteristics: inclusion, transparency, democracy, communication, equality and empowerment. It means eliciting views, listening and working together, and providing access to decision-makers and information. However, it also proposes inherent challenges to traditional power structures and ways societies are organised. Its adoption may result in completely different ways of behaviour.

Evidence collected during the last 30 years proves that projects and programmes have greater impact if they enable the full participation of all stakeholders, including children and young people. Participation is now part of the fabric – both of development and other organisations across the world.

Global recognition of participation has triggered a flood of material and debate, out of which emerges a new need: to make sense of what participation actually means in particular contexts, especially for children and young people. What lessons can the history of children and young people's participation teach us? This is particularly pertinent where good examples of children truly engaging in a process sit alongside ones where their contributions are just tokenistic.

As Roger Hart and Gerison Lansdown observe in their article (page 9), the only role young people had at the World Summit for Children in 1990 was merely to usher delegates to their seats. What a contrast, then, with the positive experience of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS) in May 2002, which saw children and young people attending as part of government and NGO delegations, and participating in multiple fora to get their views, and those of their peers, heard by heads of states and governments.

Children's rights to participate are clearly articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and specifically, in Article 12, which states that the child has rights "to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child". Further articles state that it is the child's right to obtain and make known information, and to express his or her views (Article 13); the child has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14); and he/she has the right to meet with others and to join or set up associations (Article 15).

This issue of the CRIN Newsletter reviews how far children and young people's participation has progressed, through a series of regional overviews and thematic case studies. The overviews present the state of the art in each region, examine key barriers to effective participation and suggest specific recommendations, based on experience, to improve future practice. The thematic case studies describe examples of children's participation in a variety of contexts.

It is vital that we learn from past experiences involving children and young people's participation, particularly as there is now a call for their involvement in the implementation and follow-up of the outcomes of the Special Session through its action plan, *A World Fit for Children*.

Children and young people themselves are reinforcing this call with their statement entitled *A World Fit for Us*, presented by the Children's Forum to the UNGASS. In this, they state that they see the active participation of children as involving:

- raised awareness and respect among people of all ages about every child's right to full and meaningful participation, in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- children actively involved in decision-making at all levels and in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all matters affecting the rights of the child.

Given this call for their increased participation in processes and decisions which impact upon their lives, children and young people should now be recognised as having a key role in the development of more inclusive, responsive and just societies in today's world.

Andrea Khan

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News round-up

East Timor signals adoption of children's rights treaty

East Timorese officials have told a United Nations meeting on children that the new nation will soon sign the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The announcement was made at a briefing by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) on *The Protection of East Timorese Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The event in the capital, Dili, brought together a wide range of government and UN officials, civil society groups and journalists. East Timorese Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri told the briefing that the Convention is currently being considered by parliament, which he expects will soon endorse East Timor's adoption of the measure. The Prime Minister also said he hoped that the current generation of East Timor's children, who have been raised in a climate of violence, will now be able to enjoy the country's newly achieved stability.

Source: United Nations, 19 July 2002

Millions still caught in child labour trap

Millions of children are still forced to labour in dreadful conditions, a new study reveals. In a landmark global survey the International Labour Organization (ILO) shows that despite significant progress to abolish child labour, an alarming number of children are trapped in its worst forms. The report, *A Future Without Child Labour*, comes ten years after the ILO launched an international campaign against the practice and is its most comprehensive study on the subject. While its key finding is deeply disturbing, the report does note that there has been a worldwide response to calls for abolishing child labour, especially in its worst forms, through direct action at local, national and international levels.

Among the startling new figures, the report says that one in every eight children in the world – some 179 million children aged five to 17 – is still exposed to the worst forms of child labour, endangering physical, mental or moral wellbeing. Child labour continues to be a global phenomenon and a wide range of crises, including natural disasters, sharp economic downturns, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and armed conflicts, are growing in importance as reasons why the young are drawn into debilitating labour, including illegal activities such as prostitution, drug trafficking and pornography.

Source: International Labour Organization

Special Session sets new targets

The United Nations concluded its Special Session on Children with unanimous agreement on a new agenda for the world's children. Twenty-one specific goals and targets were set for child health, education and protection over the next decade. The UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (8–10 May 2002) ended after a week of negotiations, and at the close of the session, representatives from some 180 nations adopted the conference outcome document, *A World Fit For Children*. More than 18 months of consensus-building resulted in a strong future agenda focused on four key priorities: promoting healthy lives; providing quality education for all; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.

The official text of the outcome document, *A World Fit for Children*, is available in English, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, French and Spanish in pdf format on UNICEF's websites.

Source: UNICEF 10 May 2002

AIDS conference puts children first

Major research prepared for the XIV International AIDS Conference (7–12 July 2002, Barcelona, Spain) focused on children and young people in the global battle against HIV/AIDS.

The UNAIDS report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic states that while young people are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection, they offer the greatest hope for fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The findings from *Children on the Brink* (USAID, UNAIDS and UNICEF) show that more than 13.4 million children have lost one or both parents to the epidemic in the three regions studied. This figure is likely to increase to 25 million by 2010, with the result that the global orphan crisis will get worse as increasing numbers of adults with children die from AIDS, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. *Young People and HIV/AIDS – Opportunity in Crisis* (UNICEF, UNAIDS and WHO) sees young people as the key to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, but also reveals alarming news that the vast majority of the world's young people have no idea how HIV/AIDS is transmitted or how to protect themselves from the disease. The reports can be viewed on the UNAIDS website.

Save the Children UK's report, *HIV and Conflict: A double emergency*, also launched at the conference,

looks at how armed conflict makes the epidemic worse, with the two making a lethal combination that threatens the lives of young people, especially girls. The report calls on governments, donors and humanitarian agencies to uphold children's rights and to channel resources to prevent a double emergency.

Source: UNAIDS and Save the Children UK.

New High Commissioner on Human Rights approved

The UN General Assembly approved its Secretary-General, Kofi Annan's, proposal and appointed Sergio Vieira de Mello as the next High Commissioner on Human Rights. He succeeds Mary Robinson, beginning his four-year term in the organisation's top human rights post on 12 September 2002. Until May this year, Vieira de Mello headed the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), before which he was briefly Kofi Annan's Special Representative for Kosovo after working at UN Headquarters in New York as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. Since 1969, the bulk of Vieira de Mello's career has been with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), where he gathered considerable field experience. The High Commissioner for Human Rights is the UN official with principal responsibility for human rights activities, under the direction and authority of the Secretary-General.

Source: United Nations

New Rapporteur on health

The April session of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) made headway appointing a Special Rapporteur on the right to health and setting up two working groups looking at outcomes from the World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, last year.

The text of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on Torture was also adopted after ten years of negotiation. In the omnibus resolution on the rights of the child, the Commission welcomed the Secretary-General's request to conduct an in-depth study on violence against children and suggested the appointment of an independent expert to direct this work, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO). The resolution urges states to take measures to eliminate the use of corporal punishment in schools. The CHR also called upon states to abolish the death penalty for under-18-year-olds.

Source: The International Save the Children Alliance

New member for Rights of the Child Committee

Following the resignation of Amina Hamza El Guindi of Egypt earlier this year, the Egyptian Government nominated Moushira Khattab. The Committee approved her nomination in May and she will serve out the remainder of her term until the end of February 2003.

Source: NGO Group for the CRC and OHCHR, Geneva 21 May 2002

CRIN website features Optional Protocols reporting guidelines

Guidelines regarding Initial Reports to the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child – on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (CRC/OP/SA/1) and on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (CRC/OP/AC/1) – are available in the six UN languages on CRIN's website (www.crin.org). These guidelines inform states on how to provide information on State Party measures regarding the rights articulated in the Optional Protocols and the progress made on putting them into practice.

The Optional Protocols to the UNCRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (CRC/OP/SA/1) and on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict CRC/OP/AC/1 entered into force on 18 January and 12 February 2002 respectively.

Source: OHCHR

Letters to the Editor

Welcome to our new *Letters to the Editor* page – a forum for readers to share their views, criticise and exchange experiences, drawing on their own work as well as responding to key issues raised in previous issues of the CRIN Newsletter.

This is your opportunity to:
- say which issues in the CRIN Newsletter you found interesting
- reply to previous articles that are relevant to your work
- share your experiences of child rights work with other newsletter readers.

We hope you will find others' feedback in this issue interesting and look forward to hearing from you in the future.

On Mainstreaming Child Rights

Dear Editor

In response to your previous newsletter *Mainstreaming Child Rights* (March 2002) we would like to tell you about a side-event held during the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children.

A high-level panel discussion called *Women and children: from international law to national realities* was held in May at the UN in New York, as a supporting event to the 27th Special Session.

The panel underlined the importance of the international rule of law and gave concrete examples of its application at national level for advancing the enjoyment of human rights by women and children. It also highlighted the complementary application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and their Optional Protocols, and urged their ratification.

Ms Angela King, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, moderated the panel discussion. Panellists included Hans Corell, UN legal counsel; Jaap Doek, chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Regina Tavares da Silva, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, established under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The panel flagged up the important link between women's and children's rights and the significance of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in relation to women and children. One member, Unity Dow, justice, High Court of Botswana, staged a presentation, Dow v The Attorney-General of Botswana, based on a groundbreaking court case in which Botswana's discriminatory nationality law was successfully challenged. One of the outcomes of this case was the passage of legislation entitling women to pass on their nationality to their children on the same basis as men. Country-specific examples of the application of international human rights treaties, particularly those relating to women and children in domestic legal systems, were also demonstrated. A full report on this side event is available on our website at: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/panel-children/index.html

Dino Del-Vasto, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, New York, USA. Email: del-vasto@un.org

Dear Editor

A paper called 'Implementing children's rights in British Columbia using the population health framework' has been published in *The International Journal of Children's Rights* (8: 333-349). The paper is based on a two-year Canadian research project involving a public education campaign that took as its starting point Article 42 of the UNCRC, looking at it specifically from a health promotion perspective. One of the results of this undertaking was a grassroots policy review involving the UNCRC with a group of young people – the first of its kind in Canada. The model of good practice that emerged has been taken up nationally with organisations including Health Canada, Canadian Institute for Child Health, and the Froost Foundation.

Richard C Mitchell, University of Stirling, Stirling, UK. Email: r.c.mitchell@stir.ac.uk

Dear Editor

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International) presented a Bill of Girls' Rights at our 1997 European Congress in Reykjavik (Iceland). Our Bill was approved by all the delegates and participants attending the congress and it was then circulated throughout Europe and other regions. Mainstreaming activities of a national network – FIDAPA Clubs (Italian Federation of Business and Professional Women) have taken place as a result of this bill. All the clubs in the network have developed interesting programmes, such as conducting

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surveys and research and organising seminars and conferences all over the country. Some are even using the bill as a working tool to achieve this.

Mara Mosca, FIDAPA National Co-ordinator of the Working Group on the 'Girls' Bill of Rights', Corso Mediterraneo, 140, 10129 Torino, Italy

Dear Editor

We write to acknowledge receipt of the CRIN Newsletter 15/March 2002. The information contained therein is a useful addition to our organisation's resource centre and we hope that the issue of children's rights will take first priority, not only in child-focused bodies, but also in governments around the world as they plan policy, so that *A World Fit for Children* becomes a reality.

Evelynn Ogwang'-Omware, African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) – Kenya Chapter, Nairobi, Kenya. Email: anppcankenya@yotamkenya.com

On Mainstreaming Children's Participation

Dear Editor

The experience of our Concerned for Working Children group in Bangalore, India, has several examples where children's testimonies have been taken into account, especially regarding the issue of guardianship. In these cases, the magistrates were very considerate and made extra efforts to make children comfortable. They actually made their decisions based on the children's testimonies. Also, in the field of education we have had sustained support from the Government of Karnataka and over the years have been able to create spaces for children's formal input into the formal education system. In the Panchayats where we work, children are part of the school's operations and monitoring mechanism, and hold direct discussions with teachers, headmasters and school officials on a regular basis. It took several years for us to establish the mechanisms for this, but now they are in place and are working. This work as been largely possible because we have set up Task Forces at the Panchayat and the Taluk level, where children and the representatives of government departments, among others, hold discussions on all matters concerning children.

Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, India. Email: cwcblr@vsnl.com; Website: www.workingchild.org

General feedback

Dear Editor

We acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your esteemed periodical. It is a valuable addition to our reading room. A large number of readers, particularly students, teachers, doctors, engineers, journalists and research scholars benefit from its in-depth coverage of the field of child rights.

Hussain Amir, Muhammad Bin Qassim Library, Sujawal, Pakistan. Email: nbqlinfo@yahoo.com

Letters to the Editor should respond to issues raised in the CRIN Newsletter and other relevant issues relating to child rights. They should be around 100 words in length. Please include your name, your organisation, town, country and email address. We are unable to acknowledge receipt of letters but will publish interesting feedback and comments. Published letters may be edited. Please send all letters (by post or email) to:

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Changing world opens door to children

Roger Hart and Gerison Lansdown detail the progress that has been made in children's participation over the past decade and identify the next targets for conversion.

Children at the World Summit in 1990 had only one role: nicely dressed in national costume, they ushered delegates to their seats.

How different it is 12 years on, at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS), 8–10 May 2002, where several hundred children not only held their own three-day forum, but also participated throughout the full event as members of government and NGO delegations, chairpersons, speakers and contributors from the floor.

The world has definitely changed. As the contributions to this newsletter confirm, the concept of children's participation has now taken a firm hold in many countries throughout the world. The accumulated experience gained from the many thousands of initiatives developed over the past decade to respect children's active roles as participants in their own lives, enables us now to observe the important changes and trends emerging from practice and identify key challenges for the future.

Main trends

A move from individual projects showing how children's participation can work, to more sustainable programmes is taking place. NGOs are now noticeably more interested in programmes rather than one-off participatory projects, which undoubtedly reflects their realisation that single projects are time-limited and that sustained ways for young people to be involved in their communities need to be found. One of the greatest problems of relying on projects as a means of fostering children's participation was that adults were creating activities for children. While this may be appropriate in certain circumstances, it prevents children from demonstrating both to themselves and to others how much further they can go as change agents. When children are part of ongoing participatory organisations, it becomes natural for them to initiate projects themselves.

Broader inclusion of children

The past decade has seen broader inclusion of children in participatory initiatives. In 1990, street and working children were the main group of children receiving attention in highly participatory ways. Increasingly, however, agencies have begun to work with children from a wider range of environments. As we learn from Willow and Badham (page 34), activities are being designed with disabled children to encourage opportunities for them to influence what happens to them. Unfortunately, however, this example continues to be the exception. We need a greater commitment to including disabled children in mainstream participatory programmes, as well as in those dedicated to addressing their particular experiences and priorities. And children in many other settings have received too little attention. The dialogue on young people's participation must now extend to different domains and with all relevant professional groups: schoolteachers, juvenile detention professionals, hospital and health centre staff and youth workers in residential homes.

From specific goals to respecting human rights

As more children join sustained opportunities for participation in clubs and other programmes, their involvement leads to a deeper understanding of human rights. Save the Children sees this as the evolution of citizenship, which is focused on community activity and is only possible when participatory processes exist. Essentially citizenship means the exercising of one's rights for the best interest of oneself and others. Children's organisations have proven to be excellent settings for learning participatory skills and practising non-discrimination. We learn from Karkara and O'Kane (page 14) that clubs and other types of children's organisations are now flourishing in many parts of South Asia, offering the opportunity for children to learn about rights in the only effective way – by practising them. The rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child form the core organising principles of these organisations and the idea that rights and citizenship apply to all children is learned through their own discussions of membership, organisation and how they appear to the outside world. The best way to learn about gender discrimination is to face it in the daily running of your organisation. The same is true for issues of class, caste and disability.

Principles not blueprints

It has become increasingly clear that there are no blueprints for developing participatory practice. Nor indeed should there be. The imposition of pre-defined methodologies denies the opportunity for children to develop approaches best suited to their unique situations and concerns. What is vital is a commitment to working according to shared principles which are rooted in respect for children's capacities and ability to take part and a willingness to recognise them as partners.

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Adult control

Many projects are initiated and controlled by adults, offering more in the way of kudos for the organisers than for empowerment for children. The Zimbabwe Children's Parliament (McIvor, page 29) is typical of large international NGO events where the participation of children seems more a matter of image than of substance. The participants are chosen by adults and do not represent any constituency of children. There are a variety of reasons why children are selected rather than elected: in particular, adults think children lack capacity to elect their own representatives and choose appropriate individuals. A more disturbing observation, however, is that the organisers often want to control the kinds of children who will attend as well as their contribution. The good news is that as NGOs put more emphasis on building the self-organising capacities of children's groups, these token events will become more rare. One of the reasons that UNGASS was so much better than most international children's conferences was that most of the children came as true representatives of children's organisations.

Future challenges

Adults remain the major barrier to effective participation by children, and NGOs must take some responsibility for this. There is a general tendency to promote children's participatory rights only through children without talking to parents. At a minimum, this means that the chance to involve those who have the greatest impact on children's daily lives is lost. But it can have the more damaging impact of creating a struggle of values at home, leading to a backlash against children's rights because parents do not understand them. Sometimes, children even suffer punishment for their involvement.

We lack written accounts of these struggles, but we all have anecdotes to share. Many factors contribute to the failure or refusal of adults to recognise the value of a more democratic relationship with children – presumptions of children's incompetence and the invalidity of their experience, traditions of adult power over children, fears of losing status or control, fears that children will lack respect and indeed evade necessary adult protection can all play a part. And, of course, for adults who themselves have never felt empowered, it is hard to accept the importance of empowering children. Yet, as van Beers' article (page 20) shows, when adults are exposed to effective participatory practice, they invariably recognise that many of their concerns are based on misconceptions. It is vital, therefore, to invest time in working with adults as well as children, to overcome these barriers.

Putting down roots

Children's participation has become fashionable. But fashions change. There is a need to institutionalise democratic systems that allow children an active voice in their lives, if the gains made over the past decade are not to be lost. In some cases, this might be achieved through legal reforms, for example, by legislating to give children a right to develop democratic structures in their schools. Or by introducing formal mechanisms for political dialogue between national and local government and children. There is also a powerful case for lowering the age of voting to 16, to extend formal political rights to children, and for the introduction of training on participation for all professionals working with children – ranging from teachers, doctors and nurses to magistrates, staff in penal and residential institutions, police, social workers and nursery staff.

Need for evaluation

To date, there has been little independent evaluation of children's participation, whether in terms of direct impact on the participating children or impact on such diverse phenomena as legal or policy reforms, public awareness of children's rights, community improvements or services for children. One obvious improvement would be to build monitoring mechanisms into all children's participation programmes. This is necessary for any programme that calls itself participatory but many do not make their monitoring processes explicit. Evaluation schemes could be designed to build on these internal monitoring practices. But we also need to encourage the academic community to collaborate with NGOs in developing schemes of evaluation that go beyond the capacities of individual organisations. Evaluation is important – both as a source of evidence for those advocating children's participation and to enable us to learn from practice in order to strengthen existing and future programmes. A new coalition has now been formed, initially called the Children as Partners Alliance (CAPA) which hopes to build on existing experiences by sharing information between many different kinds of groups at local, national and international levels working on children's participation. For further informtion about this initiative, please visit the website: www.crin.org/childrenaspartners.

148

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Participatory action with children affected by violence

Pillsbury and Openy's (page 25) discussion of war-affected children illustrates the values of participatory approaches for helping children affected by violence and abuse to believe that they have a future. But generally, there is remarkably little literature on the special problems of working in participatory ways with such children, where we are obliged to consider the therapeutic aspects of participation. For example, enabling a child to present their painful story to a conference audience or to a television camera might sometimes be therapeutic but this will not always be the case. We need a more sophisticated understanding of such issues. There often seems to be a naïve belief that as long as children are given the chance to speak out, they can recover from an experience.

There are many groups around the world which have spent years developing sensitive approaches to working in participatory ways with abused and traumatised young people, but rarely do they write about the processes they use. Perhaps this is because of a belief that one can only be prepared for such work through a lengthy clinical training. But the scale of the problem and the number of NGOs now working with such children, means that we need to involve more of these therapeutic practitioners in dialogue with those NGOs that are promoting participatory research and action with children.

Direct involvement

Although increasing numbers of NGOs are developing initiatives to promote children's participation, it is, as yet, relatively rare for those organisations to open up their own structures in order that their planning and programming reflect the priorities identified by children themselves. Involving children, as apprentices, on management boards, in consultative workshops and through the creation of advisory forums are just some of the mechanisms that might be used to democratise organisations.

Building skills

Some of the articles in this issue demonstrate clearly that young people can emerge at a young age as leaders, and this is desirable. But too often leadership is the primary focus of training programmes. Leadership training represents an older model of democracy than the one the UNCRC inspires in so many young people. There continues to be too much emphasis on children learning to speak out rather than learning to consult with their peers. Facilitators who work with young people need to focus on the promotion of participatory skills for all, not leadership skills for the few. Leaders will always emerge, but every child needs the chance to learn the multiple skills of listening and collaborating in groups if they are to discover that they can play very different roles in building communities and achieving change.

The next decade

This has been a remarkable decade of change regarding the view of children and their capacities. Uchengamma's experience as president of the Bhima Sangha State Committee (page 32) is testimony to the profound impact of children's involvement in their own organisations. And she is not atypical. Many thousands of children through such programmes have not only raised their own levels of confidence and self-esteem, but also have successfully negotiated and campaigned for the realisation of their human rights. Through demonstrating their competence to organise and lobby for change, they have begun to shift adult attitudes and challenge many of the traditional inequalities and oppressions faced by children.

Hopefully, the next decade will bring an even greater emphasis on inclusion so that all children can discover their rights by practising them. It has always been assumed that schools are the least likely place to expect to see democratic practices, as they are the conservative core of any nation's desire to maintain the status quo. But with the global push to bring schooling to all children, they should be an obvious focus of our concern and, given the remarkable changes we have seen in the past ten years, it may no longer be too much to hope that even schools might change.

Roger Hart is professor of environmental psychology and co-director of the Children's Environments Research Group, Graduate School of the City University of New York. Gerison Lansdown is an independent children's rights consultant.

Photo: Howard Davies

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A world fit for us

Message from the Children's Forum, delivered to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children by child delegates, Gabriela Azurduy Arrieta, 13, from Bolivia and Audrey Cheynut, 17, from Monaco on 8 May 2002.

We are the world's children.
We are the victims of exploitation and abuse.
We are street children.
We are the children of war.
We are the victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS.
We are denied good-quality education and health care.
We are victims of political, economic, cultural, religious and environmental discrimination.
We are children whose voices are not being heard: it is time we are taken into account.
We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone.

In this world,

We see respect for the rights of the child:
- governments and adults having a real and effective commitment to the principle of children's rights and applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child to all children,
- safe, secure and healthy environments for children in families, communities, and nations.

We see an end to exploitation, abuse and violence:
- laws that protect children from exploitation and abuse being implemented and respected by all,
- centres and programmes that help to rebuild the lives of victimized children.

We see an end to war:
- world leaders resolving conflict through peaceful dialogue instead of by using force,
- child refugees and child victims of war protected in every way and having the same opportunities as all other children,
- disarmament, elimination of the arms trade and an end to the use of child soldiers.

We see the provision of health care:
- affordable and accessible life-saving drugs and treatment for all children,
- strong and accountable partnerships established among all to promote better health for children.

We see the eradication of HIV/AIDS:
- educational systems that include HIV prevention programmes,
- free testing and counselling centres,
- information about HIV/AIDS freely available to the public,
- orphans of AIDS and children living with HIV/AIDS cared for and enjoying the same opportunities as all other children.

We see the protection of the environment:
- conservation and rescue of natural resources,
- awareness of the need to live in environments that are healthy and favourable to our development,
- accessible surroundings for children with special needs.

We see an end to the vicious cycle of poverty:
- anti-poverty committees that bring about transparency in expenditure and give attention to the needs of all children,
- cancellation of the debt that impedes progress for children.

We see the provision of education:
- equal opportunities and access to quality education that is free and compulsory,
- school environments in which children feel happy about learning,
- education for life that goes beyond the academic and includes lessons in understanding, human rights, peace, acceptance and active citizenship.

We see the active participation of children:
- raised awareness and respect among people of all ages about every child's right to full and meaningful participation, in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- children actively involved in decision-making at all levels and in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all matters affecting the rights of the child.

We pledge an equal partnership in this fight for children's rights. And while we promise to support the actions you take on behalf of children, we also ask for your commitment and support in the actions we are taking, because the children of the world are misunderstood.

We are not the sources of problems; we are the resources that are needed to solve them.
We are not expenses; we are investments.
We are not just young people; we are people and citizens of this world.

Until others accept their responsibility to us, we will fight for our rights.
We have the will, the knowledge, the sensitivity and the dedication.
We promise that as adults we will defend children's rights with the same passion that we have now as children.
We promise to treat each other with dignity and respect.
We promise to be open and sensitive to our differences.

We are the children of the world, and despite our different backgrounds, we share a common reality.
We are united by our struggle to make the world a better place for all.
You call us the future, but we are also the present.

Source: UNICEF website (www.unicef.org/specialsession/documentation/childrens-statement.htm)

Young citizens for a new era in South and Central Asia

The grown-ups 'know best' attitude has been holding children back, but new partnerships are breaking down the barriers with heartening results. By Ravi Karkara and Claire O'Kane.

Photo: Dana Mulder

"Children's participation is an on-going process of children's active involvement in decisions that affect their lives. [...] Genuine participation gives children the power to shape both the process and the outcome. Children's citizenship involves the exercising of one's rights for the best interest of oneself and others." Save the Children UK Office of South and Central Asia, 2000.

Children's active participation and citizenship projects in South and Central Asia have recently focused on developing the exemplary role that children can play as active citizens. But the work has also shown that children's rights benefit across the board when sustainable initiatives are set up involving meaningful partnerships between adults and children.

That children have rights is a central tenet of citizenship. Those rights include the right to information, expression and association, and the right to identity and nationality. All of these rights are about participation, which is one of the four fundamental principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC and its (almost) universal ratification by governments of the world has helped to establish the value of children not only as future adults, but also as active members of society here and now.

Yet many of the practices associated with the concept of children's participation in South and Central Asia precede the UNCRC. The child-to-child approach in health education programmes, the establishment of street and working children's organisations for their empowerment, and experiments in making the learning process more interesting for children, have all contributed to the idea and practice of children's participation.

Passive is out

Children, young people and their communities do not develop by being passive. It is only through participation that they develop the necessary skills, competencies, aspirations and confidence to become active citizens. Culturally, children in Asia have not been encouraged to participate in decision-making processes. Children are generally seen as their parents' property, who should only respect and do what their elders tell them.

"It is understood that adults know better. It is not expected that children will speak in front of adults. They ask 'Who is big? Who is aged? You or me? Why do you dare to speak?"
(Boy, 14 Bangladesh)

However, a rich variety of participatory processes with children at local, district, national and regional levels is being promoted and supported across the region by many NGOs, including Save the Children

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and UNICEF. These encompass: consultations with children; participatory research with and by children; children's media initiatives; children's involvement in conferences; children as peer educators; children forming their own organisations; and children's involvement in decision-making bodies such as local government. The work related to the Special Session has acted as a common thread, inspiring practice and processes in many countries in the region which will further children's active participation.

In diverse settings across South and Central Asia, a variety of children's organisations have developed, for example, clubs, unions, committees and parliaments, enabling children to unite collectively for the realisation of their rights. Through these organisations, children and young people have highlighted a range of child rights concerns including child marriage, trafficking and sexual abuse; exploitative child labour; unequal access to education; discrimination facing girls; and the distressing impact of loans, war and drought. Through their own actions, children and young people have made the decision-makers take notice of their views and respond to injustices in ways that have demonstrable and obvious effects.

Children and young people have been encouraged to voice their concerns respectfully, showing that their participation need not diminish respect for their elders' views. Indeed, this process often enhances understanding between children and adults. Moreover, adults are realising that children and young people can contribute good suggestions regarding the development of their lives, schools, communities and wider society.

"There was a tendency to neglect children, but now we have started this process of involving them, children have motivated their parents and villagers, they have made lots of positive changes..."
(Executive education councillor, local government official, Ladakh, India)

Through participatory initiatives, the status of children is gradually changing. Children and young people's new role as active citizens is encouraged and new types of exciting partnerships between children and adults are being forged.

The South Asia Change Makers Initiative brought together children, government and corporate representatives to discuss investment for children through a series of exceptional meetings, proving the value of providing real opportunities for children's involvement. Another forum, the Regional Girl Child Symposium, focused on promoting the rights of girls across South Asia. This was an excellent networking opportunity for young people as they met many of their peers working with children and community members.

At the Regional Consultation to prepare for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), children met workers from UN agencies and NGOs working against this kind of abuse, which resulted in their having considerable impact on the future direction of the consultation.

In most work on developing children's participation and citizenship, the adoption of key principles in support of good participatory practice is proving to be more useful and relevant than following standardised 'blueprint' models.

Commitment to make participation happen, a belief in children's democratic processes, the willingness of adults to work in partnership with children and young people, and the appreciation of diversity are all essential. Children and young people must have the power to develop their own participatory initiatives, ones which are suited to their own cultural, socio-economic, political and geographical situations. Adults must be prepared to support them, developing means which recognise and involve girls and boys as key partners in the development process.

Ravi Karkara is regional programme manager, Save the Children Sweden. Claire O'Kane is children, citizenship and governance project co-ordinator with Save the Children Alliance (South and Central Asia).

Photo: Kasbeh Lamiya

A place at the top table in South America

Along with many other groups, children are excluded from power in the region. But despite the barriers, young people are now beginning to be recognised as having a legitimate voice, explain Julia Ekstedt and Blanca Nomura.

When children in South America were asked what they thought participation was about, they came up with phrases like "working together" and "sharing the same things". Such ideas indicate that for them participation is associated with being able to say what they think freely, not being scared, and being valued.

Participation in South America has been shaped by four main influences: the UNCRC; Roger Hart's ladder of participation, which identifies levels of child participation; the idea of children as 'persons-to-be' (see Cussiánovich and Márquez, 2002); and Peter Crowley's concept based on the UNCRC and the right of children to participate in decision-making.

Further influence has come from Alejandro Cussiánovich's thinking 'protagonismo infantil'(or child protagonism),which grew out of the working children's movement in Latin America. Cussiánovich's idea is based on the understanding that every individual in society is entitled to decide their own present and future, which makes them a force in any private and public decision-making process. This theory is particularly relevant, since it recognises children as having the same value as adults.

These theories translate into practice, as illustrated through the many examples of participation taking place across the region. Take the inclusion of children and young people's opinions in the district development plan of Cotacachi, a town of indigenous peoples in Ecuador. This typifies the community's tradition of involving all actors of the community when decisions had to be made. This type of participation dates back to Latin America's pre-Hispanic cultures (such as the Inca and Maya) where the right to participate was an integral part of community life. Those with such strong traditions have emerged as having a sound grounding for current participatory initiatives.

An interesting example of children and young people's participation is MOANI, a movement founded and run by working children in Venezuela, which provides a channel through which children and young people can articulate their rights. It receives additional support from adults who belonged to the movement as children, and its objective is to encourage the participation of children from poor urban and rural areas. MOANI currently involves around 600 children and adolescents from Lara State, is a member of the National Child Rights Coalition, CONGANI, and participates in the activities of the International Apostolate Movement of Children.

Children's and young people's participation can also be seen in the education system, for example, in Municipios Escolares (school councils), children's

Photo: Howard Davies

organisations that exist in some 6,000 schools throughout Peru. Council representatives are democratically elected every year and share material and ideas about the UNCRC, for example, through arranging seminars for parents on child rights and the UNCRC or identifying specific child rights violations, which are then taken to the Municipal Child Rights Office. Municipios Escolares are recognised by local bodies such as the police, health centres and the Church, and now the Ministry of Education has passed a law making them mandatory in all public schools. They have also played particularly active roles in getting children's participatory initiatives underway, such as the Say Yes to Children campaign and the Special Session on Children process.

Working children's movements in Latin America have been a notable presence on the national, regional and international scenes. They lobby and advocate for the rights of working children who have had commanding influence driving through legal reforms. However, participation is not always considered as a right or a positive process and may in fact be viewed as a concession offered by adults. While some international organisations invite children and young people to discuss policies, others accuse them of being manipulated by adults and consider them to be a threat to the children's own best interest.

The different regional experiences in the South American context also illustrate the diversity of children and young people's participation. Yet it is not an easily achieved process, and undoubtedly barriers exist to making it genuine and meaningful.

One major obstacle is establishing trust. Adults may not initially believe in children's abilities, and children themselves need space and support to strengthen their innate capacity to join in successfully. They need to learn the democratic values and communication skills necessary for representing a group where more than one interest exists. Other practical barriers include access to those responsible for decisions. Decision-making structures in South American societies provide little enough access to the adult let alone to children and young people.

Children and young people are also easily manipulated to further the agendas of others. However, evidence demonstrates that children working through the structures of an organisation are more likely to contribute to a genuine participatory process and are less open to being manipulated. "If a child is alone, it is much easier to convince him" is how one boy described it. Also, through operating as organisations, children and young people find the means and space to exercise their right to participate.

Despite this, children and young people, along with women, older people, indigenous groups, and rural and urban working populations, are often excluded from decision-making structures and processes. Encouraging the participation of traditionally excluded groups both challenges and questions the established power-structures of a society.

The way forward

Those committed to children's participation need to learn from the diversity of initiatives taking place in South America. This knowledge will come through sharing experiences and assessing how those initiatives have fared. Organisations need to discuss their political and strategic goals with children, including the best ways for them to be involved in project planning, implementation and evaluation. Every programme, in both the private and public sectors, should integrate the process of children and young people's participation. This is because a genuine participatory process for children and young people is not merely a question of methods, but of providing real opportunities for children to contribute where the decisions are actually made.

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Why sharing matters when you are young and powerless in the Arab world

Nizar Rammal describes how young people are taking a leading role in the production of a health kit and how sharing experiences is vital in a world where their participation still lacks widespread recognition.

Photo: Jenny Matthews

The Arab region is young – children and young people aged 13 to 19 make up about a third of the entire population (around 90 million). Young people currently face many challenges, such as access to basic healthcare and information services, including sexual and reproductive health, and lack of universal access to education. This has a direct impact on their development, and the situation is further compounded by a strict system of taboos rooted in society, particularly regarding the role of women and their freedom.

Given this context, it is not surprising that young people's right to participation is not supported by the current political and social systems, with the result that children and young people are unable to participate in shaping their own environment.

Despite this, many initiatives are underway to facilitate the participation of children and young people in the design and development of the government's youth policies. For example, Save the Children US convened a series of youth forums in Lebanon and Jordan which aimed to engage children and young people in policy design. On the basis of this work, policy recommendations were made to the government and parliament. In 2000, UNICEF organised a regional conference in preparation for the UN Special Session on Children, which adopted an Arab Youth Declaration.

Similar initiatives are also being conducted by national and regional organisations like the Youth and Health Living Programme of the Arab Resource Collective (ARC). As part of this programme, a meeting was held for children and young people in Beirut, Lebanon in 2001. This meeting was convened to discuss various health-related issues with young people, including sexual and reproductive health, and their relationship with their neighbourhoods. This is part of a series of meetings to be held in five Arab countries (Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen, Jordan and Egypt); the programme is expected to reach at least 150 young people between the ages of 13 and19. This work is underpinned by the right of children and young people to good health, along with their right to develop and be protected, to be able to get information and to have a major say about decisions affecting their lives.

Using lessons learned from implementing the child-to-child approach in the Arab region, the Youth and Healthy Living Programme plans to adopt a youth - to-youth approach to enable the participation of young people in all stages of the programme.

Participation is central

Facilitating children and young people's participation has long been a central part of ARC's mandate. In line with the organisation's principles and strategy, young

people from across the five Arab countries were first invited to participate in Youth and Healthy Living Programme's first regional workshop in 2001, the aim of which was to engage both partners and young people in planning the programme.

Although at that time the programme was at the concept stage, participants at the meeting identified eight health issues as priorities for work with children and young people. These were: nutrition, accident prevention, health in schools, health education, health under difficult circumstances (war, occupation, street children), sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and drugs.

The workshop also provided valuable space for young people to talk about the health issues that really mattered to them. The ones they chose included relationships, sexual health, smoking, alcohol and drugs, domestic and school violence, first aid and accidents, disabilities and special needs, nutrition, sexual discrimination, gender, and political awareness – including lobbying, advocacy and how to get a say in decisions made at a political level.

The workshop helped turn the initial programme concept into a plan which was more realistic about the daily life and challenges faced by young people of the region. In addition, the approach proved the importance of participation in putting across the various views of many young people in different communities across the region and building a common approach.

Health information pack

The main aim of the Youth and Healthy Living Programme is to produce a central health resource aimed at teenagers. Throughout 2001, 16 young people from the same five Arab countries participated in workshops at the local and regional levels to plan and develop the programme's vision, and to select the topics for the health kit/pack. They also helped to shape how that was done, what was included and its design.

In the next phase, the programme aims to increase the role of young people in all aspects of its work. To see how this can be achieved a series of workshops is planned for groups of young people engaged in the youth activities of ARC's partners in the five target countries, and youth groups will be invited to work on drafts prepared for the health resource by the project's editorial team.

The workshops will pave the way for feedback from the young people on the topics, allowing them to amend the text and suggest alternative ways of presenting the information. At a later stage, a selected number will be invited to participate in the actual editing and design of the final resource pack.

Young people have a significant role in the work of the Youth and Healthy Living Programme. The organisation makes sure its work and activities on participatory initiatives dovetail with related events or moves in the region. By building on this good practice, the programme aims to support a network of youth groups pressing for the right to participate.

The participation of children and young people in the Arab world is as yet a young process, which makes the process of sharing information about successes and failures all the more important.

Nizar Rammal is programme co-ordinator for community health care and development at the Arab Resource Collective (ARC).

Pushing the participation agenda – experiences from Africa

Children play a major role in the continent's social and political movements, but there's still a lack of understanding about their right to influence their own development. Henk van Beers reports on an initiative that is challenging that problem.

Children's participation in African countries takes many forms. Children played a key role in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and throughout the continent children continue to play a major role in political and social movements.

Since the early 1990s, the importance of involving children has been recognised by a growing number of African organisations and agencies dealing with children's issues. Many advocacy and awareness campaigns depend largely on children as the main communicators. Research is becoming increasingly child-focused, and in a number of cases children have been actively involved in research as providers and collectors of data.

Children's rights and HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns have led to the establishment of many children's clubs, particularly within schools. The role of children in such activities is seen as more child-focused or more effective in collecting and passing information relevant to children. Less emphasis has been put on the role of children as social actors who contribute to their own development and that of society. This has been due to limited understanding of what children's participation actually is and the lack of skills and knowledge on how to go about involving children within schools, institutions or local government as well as a negative attitude by adults towards children's participation. These challenges need to be dealt with to enhance the range and depth of children's involvement. The following example indicates how some of these challenges can be tackled.

In 1995 a five-year programme was launched in Kenya to support organisations working with street and working children. This programme wanted to develop the capacity of these organisations to work with children, and a ten-month staff training course based around participatory action research with children was designed. The course consisted of a series of workshops followed by fortnightly meetings for participants to share experiences, address constraints and enhance their skills. In addition, the programme provided individual follow-up and feedback to participants in their workplace. The main objectives of the training programme were two-fold: first, for adult staff and management of organisations to learn more about the children; and second, to enhance their involvement in programming.

During the training, the trainees increasingly considered children as active participants in their own development and rehabilitation, and this

Photo: Petronella Petersen

continued after the training. As a result, children participated in each project stage, including research, planning, implementation and decision-making, as well as monitoring and evaluation. This resulted in significant improvements, not only in the services the children received but also in the way they were viewed by programme staff. Subsequently, the children grew in confidence and self-esteem, which enabled them to take greater control over their situation.

In order to make children active participants in the organisations' projects, the training started with a problem-analysis approach. Drawing from their own experiences of working with children, participants were able to identify and share their problems. Through a process of reflection, they were then challenged to take children's perspectives into account. In so doing, participants realised how different things look from a child's point of view. They also realised that they knew little about the children they worked with, recognising that, up till then, they had not been able to develop a trusting and open relationship with them. Once participants had accepted that children's views needed to be taken into account, they could focus on learning new tools and developing skills to facilitate children's participation.

In this example, because a problem-based approach was used, there was little need to define the concept of children's participation. Yet, in other cases, it has been necessary to address the issue of children's participation more directly, particularly when dealing with policy-makers, government officials and staff from international NGOs. One recommendation is

that the participation of children and young people should be understood and agreed upon within the context where it takes place (or is intended to take place). This is because the purpose and level of children's involvement may vary in different situations depending on the issue at hand, the adults and children involved, their capacities and capabilities, and the social-cultural and political context, etc.

This flexibility moves away from ideological discussions and prescribed definitions towards working definitions with which participants feel comfortable. With the development of a common understanding of children's participation, more practical aspects can then be addressed, such as ethics and the quality of children's participation.

Main barriers

The major obstacles towards children's participation have been adults' perceptions of this process. However, in most cases, these have been found to be based on misconceptions. Most experiences show that once adults have been sensitised to the process and once they have seen the results of a positive participatory process with children, they become more supportive. For example, through some projects, community leaders who were initially sceptical about children's involvement have become enthusiastic supporters of the process after having witnessed the seriousness, commitment and value of children's input towards communal matters.

However, organisational commitment to take children's participation seriously may not always be adhered to, especially in cases where children's involvement may have a major impact on the approach and direction of a particular programme of work. For example, in organisations with top-down and authoritarian management structures which are unsuitable for children's participation, staff efforts to be more child-focused are frustrated by management who are neither fully acquainted with the approach nor prepared to significantly refocus their work based on its outcomes. An organisation cannot afford to be half-hearted about making a participatory process with children happen. To do so risks not only raising expectations of the children involved but also frustrating staff who inevitably reflect on their own position within that organisation and become more aware and vocal about their own limited involvement.

With diplomacy and patience, such issues can be addressed, in most cases leading to greater transparency in organisations' structures and policies. With the Kenyan training programme, management training proved to be a crucial step towards obtaining lasting results and institutionalising the participation of children. In-house training, including all management and staff, proved to be most effective in ensuring that the need to involve children was supported at all levels in the organisation.

Recommendations

Training should be part of a sustained and systematic process to enable adults to understand the concept and practice of children's participation. This experience has shown that regular follow-up and support after initial training sessions is central to maximise the impact of the training. Participants should have opportunities to practise and experience what they have learned, and opportunities to share and analyse experiences and enhance their skills.

Contrary to what is often stated, children need little training to be involved in programmes. However, they do need proper and adequate information about the process and intentions of their involvement and an environment that enables and encourages their participation.

This experience from the African context proves that it is important to 'practise what you preach' and that once an organisation has decided to support a participatory process with children, a broader process of organisational change will be needed. This learning is equally relevant for other agencies, including international NGOs promoting children's participation. It will not only involve critical analysis of organisational cultures in terms of transparency of communication and decision-making structures, but will also demonstrate a genuine commitment to the long-term involvement of children in programme design, implementation and evaluation.

Henk van Beers is child participation and non-discrimination advisor for Save the Children Sweden – Southeast Asia Region.

The five-year capacity building programme, initiated by SNV-Kenya Netherlands Development Organisation, has now been transferred to a collective of organisations and trainers who were the initial beneficiaries of the programme.

A long road ahead for children in South Eastern Europe

War and deprivation following the fall of communism has made it hard to get the participation message across, says Raša Sekulović

Photo: Howard Davies

Sixteen million children and young people live in South Eastern Europe. Many of them have witnessed dramatic changes in the livelihoods of their families during the ten years since the fall of communism and Soviet control. During this time, health, social and education services have deteriorated, along with the quality of family life and in some places civil rights, as the political situation became highly insecure.

The standard of living across the region is marked by massive economic hardship, resulting in a particularly child-unfriendly environment, which fails to recognise, let alone realise, children's rights. Traditionally, there was little history of democratic participation of citizens, so the very concept of children and young people's participation was even further removed. If at all, their participation was usually limited to their visible, but meaningless, attendance at events. Furthermore, reports from different countries within the region suggest that neither the active participation of children nor full respect for their rights are considered, with the result that their right to participate in issues which affect their lives is not being realised.

Initiatives bring hope

Despite this situation, various attempts to develop meaningful participation of children and young people in the region have been supported by local or international inter- and non-governmental child-focused organisations. Through their children's rights programmes, a certain number of opportunities have been offered for children and young people to express their opinions and ideas, which may be subsequently translated into specific actions or projects.

These ideas include:

- encouraging increased involvement of children and young people in decision-making processes at various levels (for example, school councils, youth parliaments and children's governments)
- supporting children's and young people's capacity to express their opinions (for example, through debating clubs and Internet fora, etc)
- promoting children's rights through peer education and developing local child-led initiatives (children's rights information and documentation centres, child-to-child groups)
- developing consulting and advisory activities relating to adult-led projects for children and young people (child advisory teams, consultancy co-ordination bodies, etc)
- keeping children and young people informed through the media (newspapers and magazines, radio and TV programmes, etc.)
- devising specific ways through which children and young people can express views regarding political or social issues (youth marches, rallies)
- developing concrete initiatives to support disadvantaged children and young people in need (refugee and internally displaced children, children in institutions, children with disabilities, marginalised children)
- organising regular events to make it easier for children to share opinions regarding their rights (summer camps, child rights festivals).

Many examples of such initiatives are emerging throughout the region, which is developing a more active role for its young citizens. Take the Romanian Children's Forum (facilitated by Salvatii Copiii Romani), an initiative offering children the opportunity to meet with government representatives to discuss children's rights. Children participate in a wide variety of activities about children's rights, as well as focus groups and meetings with adults. This helps children and young people to develop important organisational skills.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, child advisory teams have been established, composed mainly of disadvantaged children and their advocates. Through close involvement in programme planning and priority setting, their views and priorities are integrated into Save the Children's programme work. This experience offers children the opportunity to influence the design of programmes meant for their own benefit.

As part of the Child Participation Programme of the Yugoslav Child Rights Centre, the child-to-child group in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia creates opportunities for children and young people to actively participate in civil society. The young members of this group are involved in activities such as publishing child-friendly publications and posters promoting children's rights, facilitating discussions on the UNCRC, supporting various child-led actions for disadvantaged children, peer-education programmes and putting together a guide about how to promote children's rights in the media, through its own Child Media Centre.

In addition to activities contributing to raising awareness of children's rights with peers and the media, children are becoming increasingly active in decision-making. In Albania, children's governments were established to make children active participants in the process of democratic change in their schools and communities, strengthening their links with decision-makers in the process. Through this, children and young people learn to develop their critical thinking and express their opinions.

Conclusion

Despite the many challenges relating to children and young people's participation across South Eastern Europe, these examples contribute to a changing perception of the role of children and young people in society. However, they are rarely provided genuine opportunities to organise their own 'get-togethers' and are still not being taken seriously in decision-making. A number of challenges expressed by children themselves remain to be addressed if a more genuine process of participation is to be achieved.

These include:
- promoting children's rights in school curricula
- introducing independent child representation to prevent manipulation of children's opinions
- limiting adult management of adult-initiated child-focused initiatives
- including children's participation as the cornerstone of all child/youth-related legislation
- including disabled and disadvantaged children
- creating more participative education with regular consultation with children
- engaging children and young people in decision-making processes
- raising adults' awareness about children's participation.

Raša Sekulović is child rights and NGO development programme officer, Save the Children UK – FR Yugoslavia.

Factfile

Guide to participatory research

There are various terms used to describe participatory research, and because they are often similar, people interchange them, which leads to considerable confusion. The following explanations aim to clarify different types of research by summarising typical work carried out under the most commonly used labels.

Action research

Although this term was originally used to refer to research with a high degree of participation, it has now been used for so many different types of research that the best one could say is that it describes any research that provides guidance to taking action for change.

Participatory Research (PR)

This general term is often used to refer to any one of the following types of research. However, since these have different ideologies attached to them, it is useful to be more precise by using one of the following terms:

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

PRA grew out of a set of methods called Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Rapid Assessment Procedures (RAP) and Rapid Ethnographic Assessment (REA). PRA is distinguished from these in that the research process is shared with the participants. Although used less often, the term Participatory Appraisal (PA) is preferable to PRA because it does not arbitrarily exclude participatory methods conducted in an urban context. A diversity of methods has been developed which enable people to collectively articulate and analyse their own knowledge. Because the methods are visual, people with no research training or even formal education can understand them.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Those who use participatory action research state explicitly that there should not be just partnership but ownership of the research by the participants. Participants control the research as the basis for their own programme of action. The belief is that participants view research as a process to be incorporated into their everyday problem-solving rather than something requiring external initiation. Although there is still often a role for an outside researcher, it is more clearly peripheral. While PRA proponents may claim a similar role, PAR has a clear mandate for community empowerment through its specific focus on action.

In some PAR projects, commonly those influenced by Paulo Freire, participants are encouraged to go further in their analysis of power and root causes. If we did not already have too many confusing acronyms this might be better termed "participatory emancipatory research" (PER)! For example, a group of children from very poor families investigating local housing conditions may proceed beyond the analysis required to guide their local actions to a political and historical analysis of why they live in poor housing. In this way they may become aware of the roots of their consciousness and see that they wrongly tend to blame themselves and their families for their own condition. PAR researchers may argue that the resulting consciousness is more important than the research itself or any direct action it may lead to.

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)

This phrase refers to a family of participatory approaches (including those listed above), the common strand being the participation of people in the processes of learning about their needs, capabilities and visions, and in the action required to address them (PLA Notes, International Institute for Environment and Development UK).

Factfile compiled by Roger Hart

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Young Ugandans use participation to cope with the aftermath of war

Allison Anderson Pillsbury and Akello Betty Openy report on the roles played by young people in projects highlighting the plight of adolescents affected by armed conflict.

Photo: Tim Hetherington/Network Photographers

"There are many young people in Uganda and around the world who have had to flee their homes because of war and who have not returned to school like me. I want to help them. We need our voices to be heard and to participate at all levels. We need a future."
Akello Betty Openy, 18, Ugandan youth activist

After releasing *Untapped Potential: Adolescents affected by armed conflict, a review of programs and policies* (2000), the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (Women's Commission) launched an international campaign to increase services and protection to adolescents affected by armed conflict around the world. As part of this work, we conducted participatory adolescent research projects in 2001 in three conflict areas: Kosovo, Sierra Leone and northern Uganda, with a future intervention planned for the Thai/Burma border. The project aimed to increase knowledge about the specific situation of young people in these sites, identify areas for follow-up activities and undertake advocacy efforts to generate constructive action for and with young people. Direct adolescent participation and leadership is a central component of this effort since adolescents not only have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives, but also they hold many of the answers to the problems they face.

The research teams in each country include approximately 54 adolescent researchers, 16 adult research advisers and a co-ordinating group, preferably a youth group. A diverse group of adolescent researchers is chosen, reflecting a broad range of experiences. They attend a three-day training to shape and test a research process using focus groups, individual interviews and written surveys ranking adolescent concerns. The only question that the teams are given to guide them is: "What are the main problems for adolescents in your country today, and what are some of the solutions?" The adolescents themselves decide what questions to ask so that the study is appropriate for their community. Adults support the adolescent researchers, listen to them and write a final report based on their inputs and analysis.

Akello Betty Openy, is an 18-year-old who lost her home during Uganda's upheavals and now works as youth activist in Gulu District, northern Uganda. She took part in the research project and here relates her experiences:

"I met some staff from the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children in May last year. After being nominated by an NGO that I volunteered with, I was interviewed by the Women's Commission and chosen to be an adolescent researcher. I was trained along with 54 adolescents in three districts of northern Uganda. My team was located in Gulu and was made up of Ugandan adolescents affected by the war. The second team was located in Kitgum and Pader districts and consisted of adolescent Ugandans and Sudanese refugees. During the training, I worked with other adolescents to identify our purpose as a team and decide what kinds of questions we would need to ask and who to pose them to. We not only formulated the research methodology, but we also practised it to make sure we could do it, such as lead a focus group discussion, carry out individual interviews and administer a survey.

"After the training we carried out our research for three weeks, and we interviewed over 2,000 of our friends, peers and adults to discover the problems that young people face in northern Uganda. In the course of our work, young people and adults told us that most youngsters, like myself, lacked access to education, feared abduction by the rebels, were often sick, have many personal health problems and much

Photo: Jodie Bieber/ etherA Photographers

more. After the research, we spent a week together as a team analysing our findings and another two weeks drafting our report, with the help of the adult research advisers."

Based on the material collected and Women's Commission research, a report was published: *Against All Odds: Surviving the war on adolescents, promoting the protection and capacity of Ugandan and Sudanese adolescents in Northern Uganda*, which includes recommendations for NGOs, governments, UN agencies and international organisations. Adolescent researchers were subsequently involved in national and international advocacy.

Akello Betty Openy continues: "After the publication of the report I was elected by my colleagues to present our research findings in New York with the Women's Commission. It was my first time leaving Uganda. Since then, I have visited the United States three times, with the help of the Women's Commission, to give speeches about our findings and recommendations and meet with United Nations, government and NGO officials."

The overwhelming importance of adolescent participation is illustrated in that the majority of the adolescent researchers with whom we have worked have gone on to design, find funding for and implement projects in their communities. Many NGOs and donors also use the findings to address young people's concerns.

Akello Betty Openy adds: "Compelled by the horrors of the research findings and the solidarity felt by the adolescent researchers, some of us have come together to take action. I co-founded Gulu Youth For Action (GYFA) in November 2001, a youth organisation to advance the common cause of young people and mitigate the socio-economic impact of war on them. Our motto is: Be the change we urge for. We work to engage other young people on issues such as girl child education, reproductive health matters and conflict resolution, especially in the camps catering for people who have lost their homes. We are, however, struggling to find funding."

Achieving proper participation takes a lot of time. It is important to be engaged with and be available for adolescents. Widespread collaboration and the involvement of many local stakeholders is important to get a realistic idea of young people's situation in a community, how they see themselves and how others regard them. Establishing a trusting relationship is important and that rests on never promising more than you can deliver. The Women's Commission's participatory work has demonstrated that programme and policy interventions will be more effective if they actively involve adolescents in identifying needs and creating solutions.

Looking back over her experience working on the project, Akello Betty Openy sums up: "While the research was not easy for most of us since we had no earlier experiences to draw on, the skills we learned and the solidarity built up in the team made us successful. Since then we have participated in local and international conferences, advocating on behalf of young people back home. Our advocacy has certainly had an impact and we live in hope that with more participation a better world can be achieved."

Allison Anderson Pillsbury is children and adolescents project manager at the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. Akello Betty Openy is a 18-year-old youth activist from Uganda.

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Stepping stone to a healthy and happier future

Many communities prevent the young learning about sex, a fatal move where HIV infection is concerned. Alice Welbourn reports on the Stepping Stones workshops that bring young people into the fold.

With millions of children in the world orphaned because of, and infected by, HIV, the issue of children and HIV/AIDS needs to be addressed as a rights issue. Sexual abuse and exploitation of children, for example, as well as the development of their own natural interest in sexual activity means that they require specific support and information, if they are to develop awareness of HIV/AIDS related issues.

Societies traditionally protect children from accessing information about sex, believing that it will encourage them to become sexually active earlier in their development. However, there is increasing acceptance that access to sensitive, non-judgemental sex information is essential for children and young people if their rights and self-protection regarding their sexual and reproductive health are to be realised. It is also crucial in preventing early sexual activity. Furthermore, there is the acknowledgement that children and young people need to participate in specific processes which offer them the privacy and security to explore their concerns around relationships in this area.

Stepping Stones is one such process, offering ordinary community members the opportunity to create their own responses to the threats and effects of HIV and related issues. It is a training package in gender, HIV, communication and relationship skills, following a participatory workshop model, and is designed to tackle HIV prevention through a gender analysis of sex and its context.

Young people aged ten and above are encouraged to join the adults in their communities in a series of workshop sessions that take place over several weeks. Involvement is entirely voluntary and participants work in separate peer groups that they choose based on gender and age. Every few sessions, groups are brought together to share findings in a carefully structured environment, all with equal status so as to breakdown the hierarchical structures (eg gender and age-based) of the community. The workshops are based on participatory methods (for example, theatre for development and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) drawing techniques) which facilitate the involvement of both literate and illiterate members of the community.

The workshops follow specific themes:

- peer-group co-operation and identification
- HIV and safer sex
- why we behave in the ways we do
- ways in which we can change.

The first workshop sessions tackle easier issues. This paves the way for more challenging exercises in the later sessions. The workshop discussions explore a wide range of issues, including ideals and realities, what love is, prejudices, risk-taking, gender and age inequalities, power structures, tradition, trust, refusing unwanted sex, assertiveness, preparing for death and taking control.

Photo: James Brabazon

It may not be surprising, then, that some workshop sessions can lead to serious moments. However, they are also full of laughter. The process is more meaningful to participants as the material they discuss is initiated by themselves, drawing from their specific experiences. At the same time, solutions which participants present to one another during the workshops, and through special requests to the wider community at the end of the process, are remarkably similar whatever the continent and context.

These solutions include calls for a reduction in gender violence and more harmony in households and communities; greater mutual respect and understanding between males and females and between younger and older people; increased use of condoms; greater self-esteem among young people and women; and a greater support for people with HIV and their carers.

As a result of the participatory Stepping Stones process, there have been tangible results regarding the way in which children and young people regard their sexual and reproductive health rights. For example, in Entebbe, Uganda, officials were deeply moved to hear ten-year-old girls requesting sugar daddies to leave them alone. Elsewhere in Uganda, young people reported having platonic relationships with members of the opposite sex, and in other cases young men declared their determination to make something of their lives. Some have even started to do unpaid care for people with HIV and their carers, rather than just laughing at them as they said they used to. In Dar es Salaam, parents of 15,000 primary school children participating in Stepping Stones workshops also requested them for younger children. In the Philippines, leaders of both the Girl and Boy Scouts movements decided to work together for the first time to hold a joint Stepping Stones workshop for themselves.

Processes like Stepping Stones cannot on their own hold back or reverse the tidal wave of HIV. Child-friendly service provision, laws and policies, sensitive schools programmes and child-friendly media all have critical roles to play in supporting children and young people. Children and young people have the right to participate fully in and learn about anything which protects and promotes their sexual and reproductive rights and wellbeing. Stepping Stones, if well adapted and supported, appears to be one process that can help young people advance their hopes for a safer and more positive future, for themselves and the world.

Alice Welbourn is a freelance consultant who developed Stepping Stones. She has worked on gender-sensitive participatory approaches to sexual and reproductive wellbeing and rights for the past ten years. Further information about Stepping Stones is available at www.steppingstonesfeedback.org.

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Hard lessons from Zimbabwe's children's parliament

A children's parliament is only any good if it represents young people and takes action on their behalf. In Zimbabwe neither is happening, says Chris McIvor.

Photo: James Brabazon

Several years ago the Zimbabwean authorities set up a children's parliament to create a forum where children could raise their views, concerns and hopes for the future with senior politicians. This now meets every year and in itself is a major step towards integrating children's participation into national decision-making.

However, an investigation with past and present child parliamentarians has revealed this body has major flaws and problems. And the implications are considerable, not only for a more meaningful child parliament, but also for other participatory programmes trying to establish models of good practice.

Representation

The process of selecting children as parliamentarians has normally been undertaken by adults and the selection criteria has not been understood by the majority of children consulted in the study. As a result they believed that candidates were determined by the personal bias of the adults involved in the programme.

As parliamentarians were not elected by their peers, most other children felt that they represented no one but themselves. Even though parliamentarians were titled after a particular political constituency, very few had interacted with the children living there. This lack of accountability raised serious concerns about the sincerity of the programme.

As a former child MP claimed:

"The children's parliament is called a 'mock' parliament by the local media. The term is right, because the child parliament contradicts the purpose of what a parliament should be, namely a forum to share and express the opinions and wishes of other people, not just the views of a few select delegates."

In broader terms, the issue of representation, including that of children being selected by adults to attend events such as the UN Special Session on Children (May 2002), needs to be addressed if child participation is to move beyond the kind of tokenism that often characterises such initiatives. A flawed process both invalidates any claims that an individual child is representing "children's views" and undermines a valuable opportunity for children to learn about the practice of democracy, transparency and accountability.

Social bias

Child parliamentarians involved in the research acknowledged that most of them belonged to a privileged stratum of society, as nearly all were selected from better-off urban schools, on the grounds that they would be more confident and articulate. This resulted in the exclusion of a large section of the population from a forum that was meant to represent all children's interests. Many parliamentarians indicated that they knew little about the problems faced by their poorer counterparts, so the issues discussed reflected a class, economic and ethnic bias, undermining the parliament's validity.

When Save the Children organised a visit by a former child president to one of the poorest parts of the country, she indicated that it would have been more useful had it taken place while she was still "in office", so that the children from her constituency could have been better represented in the parliamentary discussions.

Ignoring the social bias of children is common to many projects that claim to promote their

participation. It is as if childhood by itself defines a unique set of issues that can be divorced from other factors. Yet children's views reflect their class, economic and ethnic backgrounds and without exposure to the views of those from different social backgrounds, children, like adults, will present their own biased priorities.

Taking children seriously

Despite these issues of accountability and representation, many of the child parliamentarians believed their recommendations offered a constructive view of a better world for children in Zimbabwe. Yet after the three-day meetings that take place every year, they receive no indication of initiatives resulting from their proposals, which raises serious concerns about the sincerity of the exercise and the commitment of adults to genuinely listen to what they have to say.

This issue is echoed by many children who participate in events organised to explore their opinions. They claim that adults often applaud the ability of children to articulate issues, but show little sign of tangible commitment to their proposals. It is important to be clear about what children are saying. They are not claiming the right to have all their suggestions acted upon, but feel that adult participants never challenge their views because there is no intention to take them seriously. A case in point is the publication *Our Right to be Heard* by the former child parliamentarians. Although the study was widely applauded by senior government officials as providing a way forward for a more effective child parliament, to date not one of their recommendations has been implemented.

As one of the authors stated:

"If they disagree with us, then why don't they say so."

All the child parliamentarians involved in the research strongly endorsed the principle of the child parliament, seeing it as progress towards including children's voices in national decision-making. Yet somehow it had got lost, failing to contribute meaningfully to this process.

Unless the process of child participation is adequately supported and respected by adults, children may become cynical about their participation, which may result in the loss of valuable input from children in terms of the design, implementation and monitoring of projects, and lead to lost opportunities for children to develop skills in communication, democratic decision-making and leadership.

Chris McIver is programme director of Save the Children UK – Zimbabwe.

Factfile

Guide to creating the right environment for children and young people's participation

Ethical issues always need to be taken into account throughout (and beyond) the process of children's involvement. These may vary and relate to such factors as the age of children involved, the children's developmental stage, their experience, exposure and socio-cultural background, their status and gender, as well as the topic at hand and adults involved.

The following are some basic ethical guidelines for children's involvement.

Voluntary involvement

Children's involvement in any initiative should be voluntary. They should also have the right to change their mind about their participation during the process.

Non-discrimination

Children's representation should relate to the specific issues in question and an inclusive approach should be adopted.

Provision of and access to information

Children need to be sufficiently informed about the purpose, process, expected outcome and implications of their involvement. They should have opportunities to gather and analyse information themselves.

Confidentiality and privacy

Children's identity and the information they provide should be kept confidential. Communicating children's information to a wider audience should only be done with their agreement and should not put them at risk.

Avoid putting children at risk

Children's involvement may interfere with their education or work. Those who aid children's involvement have to be aware that children may put themselves at risk by expressing their views or discussing sensitive issues in a group.

Flagging up children's contributions

Throughout the process of children's involvement, children's views should be given equal respect to those of adults and taken into full consideration.

Provide feedback and follow-up

Children should be informed about the outcome of decisions and be provided with an opportunity to react. Efforts should be aimed at making children's participation an integrated part of all activities, decisions and policies that affect children.

Other factors to consider when facilitating children's participation include:

- Democratic or fair principles – look at the fairness of election/representation.
- Being non-judgemental – don't focus on stereotypes attributed to certain groups of children.
- Use appropriate methods and approaches – these should suit children's abilities, capacities and circumstances.
- Facilitation skills – key facilitation skills include encouraging children, building trust and making them feel comfortable, being respectful, honest, non-imposing, creative, active, patient and flexible.
- Interactions between children and facilitators – time should be set aside for children and adults to get to know each other to ensure that children feel comfortable.
- Other adults – adults not directly involved, such as parents, teachers, school authorities and community leaders, may have to be informed about the activity to prevent interference or repercussions. This can also provide further support to the children.

Factfile compiled by Henk van Beers, Save the Children Sweden

Photo: Jenny Matthews

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Knowing rights from wrong in India

Participation has transformed a 14-year-old Indian girl's life. Instead of being forced into marriage and facing a life of drudgery, Uchengamma is president of the working children's union Bhima Sangha, fighting injustice and campaigning for a better deal.

Photo: Dario Miccieri

Early on I learned about Bhima Sangha from the Concerned for Working Children organisation, one of the first NGOs working exclusively on the issue of child labour and children's rights in India.

From time to time I would attend the meetings of Bhima Sangha, a union of, by and for working children in Karnataka, as well as those held by the Makkala Panchayats, children's village councils, which took place regularly in my village. I became a member of Bhima Sangha in 2000. I became increasing involved and now I am its state president.

When Bhima Sangha planned a leadership training programme at state level in 2001, I was selected as a participant. During the training programme, I learned how to form and lead children's organisations, how to list issues in order of importance and how to do cost and benefit analyses. As a result, my participation in Bhima Sangha grew. I had a clearer idea about what information and experiences I should take from other organisations and understood better which of our organisation's experiences to share with others.

Before I joined Bhima Sangha, my parents asked me to leave school to work in the fields. In those days, I felt that this was the right thing to do, but now I feel differently; that having an education was, and still is, my right. I also feel that children of my age should not be involved in child labour. Through my involvement in Bhima Sangha, I know that I have changed a lot. I have learned about working children from different areas and the situations in which they live and work. I have learned how to get along well with other children and the importance of building relationships with them. I have had opportunities to be a resource person for several children's and women's programmes – and I have gained a lot from this experience. I have also earned respect as an individual and as a member of an organisation.

Before joining the organisation, I hardly spoke to others. I never went anywhere apart from my house, my fields and my village. I use to feel that it was wrong to talk to others, especially boys. Now I have learned to socialise easily and can speak up without hesitating. I can visit far away places and participate without fear or anxiety. Now I have the ability and the confidence to determine what is right and what is wrong. For example, when my family decided to take me out of school at the age of 11, I didn't even react to their decision. In those days I used to think that whatever adults do is always right. But recently, when my family and my community tried to make me marry against my will, I tried to convince them that this marriage was wrong.

As well as being the new president of Bhima Sangha, Uchengamma is the president of Makkala Panchayat. She is now leading a protest movement against child marriage in her village in northern Karnataka. Makkala Panchayats in this region have highlighted child marriage as a major issue of concern and have been consistently raising it publicly. Despite protests, the practice of child marriage continues practically unabated in this region. According to one survey, the average age of marriage in these Panchayats is 13 years for girls and 18 years for boys. In several cases children as young as four years old have also been married off. The detrimental implications of child marriage on the minds and bodies of these children is clear and the action is a violation of children's rights and is also against India's constitution.

Part of press release issued by the Bhima Sangha, Makkala Panchayats and the CWC, 3 June 2002.

When discussions with my family and community failed, I protested against my proposed marriage with the help of the Makkala Panchayat, Bhima Sangha and several other supporting organisations. Our protest was successful.

Previously, our community looked down upon girls who would speak or sing in public. They used to say that those girls lacked good character. I too used to think like them. Now, I think it is a matter of great respect for children, especially girls, to have opportunities to be heard in public.

As I said in the film *Citizens Today* (2002) that is available from Concerned for Working Children: *"First of all, we must have integrity, and then we should demand the same from others. We don't want anyone to point fingers at us. We want to bring credit to our organisation. We respect others and we expect others to respect us."*

With the help of the Sangha, many children are now trying to participate, develop skills and stand on their own feet. Through my participation in Bhima Sangha, many children who are members of the organisation are actively participating in various fields, programmes and discussions. As a result of the work of the organisation, the situation of working children has improved in my area. Earlier, working children were never paid the right wages for their labour. Now they demand this as a right and have actually obtained better working conditions and better wages as a result. I also believe that because of our fight against child marriages, the situation of girls like me in our village has improved.

Most often barriers to children's participation come from families, from neighbours and other members of the community, especially if they lack awareness about our participation. If the child is a girl there are greater restrictions on her movements and she is not allowed to participate. Boys face other kinds of restrictions such as pressures from work. For instance, if a boy is working on a farm or in a hotel, he does not have any time to participate. Boys face a lot of pressure and their families put a lot of responsibility on them. Because of this, they lack time to seek out information, to learn and to participate.

Adults who are aware of the importance of children's participation should educate children and other adults. They should encourage children to learn and should create opportunities for them to participate. They should also help children to distinguish between good and bad participation.

I am very happy that I am one of leaders of our organisation. I am also very aware that such leadership brings with it a lot of responsibility. I am always thinking about how to make our organisation stronger. I am trying to find ways of building on the information, opportunities and respect that I get in order to achieve something remarkable for our organisation.

Uchengamma's story was put together with the help of Anuradha Shetty, research assistant at CWC, and translated from Kannada by Kavita Ratna, director of Samvada, CWC's programme on communication and advocacy.

Photo: Dena Mistelberger

Telling it like it is: young disabled people join forces

Carolyne Willow and Bill Badham describe what was gained when young people linked up to run a striking multi-media campaign to get their voices heard.

Photo: Peter Fryer

Pupil Chris Martin took particular notice when a poster appeared in his school advertising a video club for young disabled students. The 12-year-old student had been hoping for something like this, a place where there wouldn't be sneaky jokes or put downs because of his disability. At the first meeting, set up by The Children's Society, Chris expected to watch videos, not make them. But he was wrong, and from that start in 1997 this group has gone from strength to strength, sharing experiences and campaigning against disability discrimination. Chris and his friend James even produced a cartoon highlighting the issues.

Their timing was just right to get involved in campaigning multi-media projects, as it was also then that the mould-breaking Ask Us! Initiative was just getting off the ground. The initiative had emerged from an advisory group for the UK Government's Department of Health (DoH) five-year Quality Protects programme. The group was charged with helping young disabled people and their families and giving them a far greater role in planning their services. The group had two main objectives. First, that the individual needs of disabled children and their families were assessed and regularly reviewed; and second, ensuring that users and carers were actively engaged in planning services and tailoring care, as well as ensuring there was a system in place to handle complaints.

The Quality Protects programme presented a unique opportunity for young disabled people to influence a national government initiative and The Children's Society offered to help, with support from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. But it was project co-ordinator Lynette Partington's use of multi-media that ensured the consultation was genuinely inclusive for over 200 disabled children and young people, including some with severe and multiple impairments. This became known as the Ask Us! project.

Six local CDs were produced by groups of disabled children and young people and project staff, each focusing on different areas of exclusion, such as access to play, leisure and education, and relationships with friends and families. The groups communicated their concerns and ideas through graphics, cartoons, video and songs, which they composed and sang. In addition, a summary CD from the six CDs was compiled, containing key messages about the young people's understanding and experience of inclusion, consultation and participation. This was targeted at key people in local and national government.

At the launch of Ask Us! in 2001, attended by over 200 people, the young people ran workshops and gave advice on lessons learned. Ian Sparks, then chief executive of The Children's Society, called for radical change, declaring: *"We can't go on like this. These children and young people are part of this world. There should be one world together, for all of us."*

Recognising the impact of Ask Us! on both the Quality Protects programme and wider policy and practice, a second phase began. Eight local consultations with 180 young disabled people took place, based on principles in the UK Government's strategy for Learning Disabled People called Valuing People. These included: rights, inclusion, choice and independence.

The summary CD starts with children and young people declaring that participation is manipulative if it does not lead to improved services. *"Know your rights!"* calls out one young man. They go on to state the practical changes needed to fulfil their rights:

- to be included and to go out in the community, with the necessary public, personal and support resources
- to receive appropriate services that promote choice and independence
- to participate in meetings and reviews
- to be safe.

The results

The young researchers themselves have been in charge of the Ask Us! consultations. They have presented their work to local and national government and given evidence to the Committee on the Rights of the Child through the UK's reporting process for the UK. Linking the message to a national initiative, Quality Protects, has helped bring about a process of wider change. For example, according to a senior member of the Department of Health, the success of recent legislation for the introduction of guidelines for accessible parks is largely down to the influence of Ask Us!

Ask Us! illustrates some key lessons for participation that is effective in achieving social change with and for young disabled people.

First, workers recognise that challenges faced by disabled young people are due to discrimination in society and lack of resources, rather than individual incapacity. Article 23 of the UNCRC stresses their right to "social integration" and "active participation in the community". Yet this is rarely their experience. Second, there is a striving for equality, with adults recognising the young disabled researchers' unique contribution and encouraging them to take as much control of their lives as possible. Third, children and young people have been supported in choosing their own means of communication, not straitjacketed by professional forms and norms.

But perhaps most important is that the young people have felt they have been instrumental in achieving change. As one young person summed up: *"It was good being on the other side of the fence for once and making a difference to other young people's lives."*

Carolyne Willow is joint national co-ordinator of the Children's Rights Alliance for England. Bill Badham is development officer with the National Youth Agency.

This article is based on a chapter in *Participation in Practice: Children and young people as partners in change* by Carolyne Willow. For further information about Ask Us! contact Chris Osborne at The Children's Society. Email: chris.osborne@childrenssociety.org.uk.

Photo: Stuart Freedman

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174

Calender of events

Events for November 2002 - January 2003

November

19 November, worldwide, focusing on Geneva, Switzerland

World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse 19 November 2002
Women's World Summit Foundation
PO Box 2001, 1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland
T +41 22 738 6619; F +41 22 738 8248;
E dignity@vtxnet.ch
W www.woman.ch/children/introworlday.asp

20 November

Universal Children's Day

20 November

Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

20–23 November, New York, USA

NAEYC Annual Conference
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
Conference Department
1509 16th Street, NW Washington DC 20019, USA
T +1 202 232 8777; F +1 202 328 2614
E conference@naeyc.org
W
www.naeyc.orghttp://www.naeyc.org/conferences/annual/2002/inst_annConf.htm

December

9–10 December, Swanick, UK

Children in Communities Annual Conference 2002
The Children's Society
T +44 115 942 2974

10 December

Human Rights Day

January

21–23 January 2003, Porto Alegre, Brazil

Consultation of NGOs on Education For All
UNESCO Contact Team Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education For All
Susanne Schnuttgen
7, place de Fontenoy 75352 Paris 07 SP, France
T +33 1 45 68 21 41; F +33 1 45 68 56 26;
E ccngo.efa@unesco.org

13–31 January, Geneva, Switzerland

32nd Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Secretariat for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,
8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
T +41 22 917 9000; F +41 22 917 9022;
E ssyed@ohchr.org or jmermet@ohchr.org
W www.ohchr.org

29 January, London, UK

Innovative Approaches to Face-to-Face Work with Young People
Trust for the Study of Adolescence
23 New Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 1WZ, UK
T +44 1273 771249; F +44 1273 729098; E info@tsa.uk.com
W www.tsa.uk.com

Directory of Child Rights Organisations: Membership Update Form

The third edition of CRIN's Directory of Child Rights Organisations will be published in Spring 2003. CRIN's biggest challenge is to ensure that the information is up to date. We would therefore like to remind all our members who have not yet filled out the update form (sent 15 July) to do so as soon as possible in order for us to ensure that your organisation's details are accurate. To view your page on our website, please visit www.crin.org/organisations

CRIN members must complete a CRIN Membership Update Form in order to update their information in the Directory. This form can be sent to members via post or fax, and returned via post or fax. (Important: We kindly request that all members include their CRIN Member Number in correspondence.)

For more information, or to receive a CRIN Membership Update Form, contact:

Veronica Yates, Communications Assistant, CRIN
Email: vyates@crin.org Fax: +44 (0) 20 7793 7628

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Information

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a membership-driven organisation and network of more than 1,295 child rights organisations around the world. It strives to improve the lives of children through the exchange of information about child rights and the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A website
Updated regularly, the website is a leading resource on child rights issues and contains references to hundreds of publications, recent news and forthcoming events, as well as details of organisations working worldwide for children. The site also includes reports submitted by NGOs to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

An email service
Distributed twice a week, CRINMAIL provides regular news bulletins about child rights issues, as well as information about new publications and forthcoming events.

A newsletter
Published three times a year, the newsletter is a thematic publication that examines a specific issue affecting children. It also summarises news, events, campaigns and publications.

Child Rights Information Network
c/o Save the Children
17 Grove Lane, London, SE5 8RD
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7716 2240
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7793 7628
Email: info@crin.org

www.crin.org
Bookmark CRIN's website to learn more, or email us to contribute news or information.

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Previous issues

CRIN Newsletter 12, March 2000:
Education

CRIN Newsletter 13, November 2000:
Children and Macroeconomics

CRIN Newsletter 14, June 2001:
The Special Session on Children

CRIN Newsletter 15, March 2002:
Mainstreaming Child Rights

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